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# **RECRUITING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA – TOWARDS A RELATIONSHIP ORIENTATION**

**by**

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*"It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in those who would profit by the new order... This arises partly from the incredulity of mankind who do not truly believe in anything new until they have an actual experience of it."*

*Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince*

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Changes in the competitive environment, largely spurred by restrictions in government funding and an increase of educational service providers in the market, have forced higher education institutions to become more proactive in terms of student recruitment. In response, many institutions have turned to corporate principles to run their operation, and to recruit their 'customers' (i.e. the students themselves).

The research problem of this dissertation serves to ascertain whether using a relationship marketing approach is conducive to the task of identifying, selecting, and recruiting highly desirable students. In this respect, particular emphasis is placed on whether these individuals are actually interested in establishing a pre-application relationship with a select number of institutions, as well as the benefits they hope to accrue from such relationships.

Unfortunately, several authors advocate that marketing is seen as holding little value by many individuals within the higher education sector. It is suggested that part of the problem emanates from a limited understanding of the marketing function and the corresponding benefits it is able to offer (Kirp, 2004). In this respect, administrators tend to use only the promotion elements of marketing like public relations, advertising and personal selling to increase enrolments (Ivy, 2002). Additionally, according to Kotecha (2003:4), "the sustained myth that surrounds institutions is that branding is not needed when the institution has a solid reputation and long tradition." These mindsets pose challenges to the implementation of effective higher education marketing.

However, as higher education institutions begin to realise the merits of marketing, they gain a better appreciation that students deserve attention over a longer timeframe than previously anticipated. In fact, several authors (e.g. Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, 1991; Peck *et al*, 1999; etc) have proposed opting for a lifetime view of the customer – ascending through the stages of 'prospect' to 'partner'. A number of frameworks, including those of BearingPoint (2003), Kotler and Fox (1995), and Oblinger (2003) are discussed within the dissertation in order to further articulate these developments in a higher education context.

Relationship marketing is then considered in terms of frameworks published by Schriver (1997), Terblanche (2003), etc. Boon and Kurtz (2005) and Strauss *et al* (2006) contend that Customer

Relationship Management is an evolution of relationship marketing, brought about by the marriage of *Information and Communications Technology* and the conceptual basis of relationship marketing

Nonetheless, there are reported short-comings of relationship marketing and CRM. Firstly, not all customers wish to commit themselves to a relationship with an organization. Secondly, relationship marketing can serve to increase costs, as well as revenues. Thirdly, external opportunities may even be overlooked due to the closeness of the parties (Newell, 2003; Verhoef and Langerak, 2002).

Whilst relationship marketing is considered as an advancement in developing the student recruitment function, there are other - more subtle - means of implementing positive changes. Three such themes identified in the literature were brand management, youth marketing, and *Information and Communications Technology*. Brand management is a critical activity as the 'brand' and 'reputation' of an institution are regarded as synonymous (Kirp, 2004). In a recent study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council, the reputation of the institution was identified as the primary factor in the student's decision to enroll at a specific institution (Cosser, 2002). Youth marketing provides insights into the target market for student recruiters and suggests that these individuals are 'up-aging', demanding sincere communication, have a strong technological orientation, and are generally driven by material desire (Donnell, 2002; UISM, 2002; UISM, 2003b). Student recruitment marketers should therefore position their recruitment programmes along these lines and appeal to the specific needs of the youth market. The importance of *Information and Communications Technologies*, such as the Internet, in the marketing plan has been demonstrated by many colleges and universities (Conn and Shupp, 1998; Snyder *et al.*, 1998). In response, institutions across the board have begun the process of 'virtualisation' (Columbia University, 1995). The South African marketplace appears to be ready for the advent of electronic communications, as there are approximately 25 million cellular users (Cellular News, 2005) and 3.6 million Internet users – at least 95 000 of which are scholars (Goldstuck, 2005) – at the time of writing.

A number of student recruitment marketing practices were found to be employed by institutions in South Africa. In terms of mass marketing practices, these included radio, television and print advertising, as well as outdoor sponsorship. In terms of semi-direct and direct marketing practices, these included in-school presentations, career evenings at schools, career exhibitions for grade eleven and twelve scholars, open days at the institutions, recruitment via an institution's alumni, and database/direct marketing to senior scholars.

Higher education institutions reported that they consider relationships with schools to be absolutely critical in the student recruitment process. This is due to the fact that schools provide these institutions with access to their target market – in effect, acting as “information gatekeepers” (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004:355). In this respect, the ‘Student Recruitment Relationship Triangle’ was conceived as a relational map depicting the relationships between three key constituents in the student recruitment process, namely the higher education institution; feeder schools; and scholars and their parents. The strongest relationship appears to be that between the school and its scholars, the moderate strength relationship is that between tertiary institutions and their ‘feeder schools’, and the weakest relationship is that between the institution and the prospective student. The marketing strategist’s challenge is therefore to leverage the power of the strongest relationship so that higher education institutions can ‘win over’ schools and therefore project a positive image of themselves, through the school, onto prospective students.

Survey results of this study indicate that 80% of the respondents thought the applications process to be “fair” or “good”. It may therefore be concluded that scholars are largely satisfied with this process. The most prominent grievance focused on the length of time taken for their application to be processed and the lack of feedback both during and after this process. In numerous instances, the suggestion was provided that institutions engage in a higher level of communication with prospective students, and furthermore become more transparent with respect to the process being undertaken. Other suggestions include maintaining a comprehensive and frequently updated web site, implementing an online applications system whereby scholars can apply via a web interface, and ensuring that admissions staff are both well trained and accessible, therefore being in a position to comprehensively deal with basic and advanced queries simultaneously.

The survey results also indicate that although some scholars pay serious attention to their future course and institution of study from grade 8, a significant increase is registered from grade 10 onwards. With respect to the period in which scholars first perceive the need to consider the financing of their further studies, it is evident that significant momentum is only gathered in grade 11. Just under half (49%) of the individuals surveyed applied to a single institution, and just over a quarter (28%) applied to two institutions. These statistics coincide with the finding that 87 % of the respondents indicated that they had a strong preference of institution. In this respect, it may be argued that scholars are particularly selective about the institution they wish to attend and, subsequent to this decision, become committed to achieving this objective. It is evident that scholars exhibit behaviour which indicates that they are either loyal, or potentially loyal, to their preferred institution.

There are a number of parties that offer credible tertiary education advice to prospective students – some via personal channels and others via mass orientated channels. The most credible source of information is deemed to originate from the scholar's parents. Thereafter advice appears to be valued from school teachers and headmasters; friends and siblings; the media; and the scholar's extended family, respectively. However, the analysis revealed that responses fell within a narrow range, suggesting a limited degree of variability in terms of credibility. Nonetheless, three distinct cohorts were found to exist. Therein, credibility profiles matched to a close degree. The first cohort consists exclusively of the prospective student's parents, the second cohort consists of school teachers/headmasters and friends/siblings, and the third cohort consists of his/her extended family and the media. This simplistic framework may therefore be used to provide effective segmentation with the cohorts offering descending orders of credibility, respectively.

The *reputation of the institution* was found to be the most important factor in a scholar's decision of a place of further study. *Geographic location* is considered second most important, *campus safety* third, *tuition fees* fourth, *financial aid offered* fifth, *ease with which accepted* sixth, *social programmes offered* seventh, and *recommendations from friends/family* eighth.

Scholars' receptiveness to the prospect of entering into a pre-application relationship with a tertiary education institution was found to be favourable. A mere 8% of the respondents claimed that they didn't wish to have a relationship with an institution prior to the applications period. The remainder wished to be associated with one or more institutions. It was concluded that, on average, the more serious scholar is interested in relationships with two institutions. In this regard, the factors attracting scholars to such relationships were identified. The availability of *financial aid* was found to be the most prominent factor, followed by *curriculum advice*, *reduced application fees*, *an expedited application process*, *invitations to social events*, *prestige*, and *receiving merchandise*. It therefore appears that scholars are looking for real value and are less concerned with 'feel good' offerings such as invitations to social events, the prestige of holding such an association, and receiving free merchandise. To this end, a clear divide between 'feel good' benefits and career enhancing benefits was highlighted in a factor analysis test.

General recommendations include that small scale CRM student recruitment initiatives be launched as pilot programmes; traditional recruitment techniques be supplemented with a CRM approach, but not necessarily replaced by such; student recruiters pay closer attention to trends within the youth market; and that strategic brand management and *Information and Communications Technology* be given higher priority within the student recruitment realm.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

## **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Public tertiary education institutions in South Africa have for decades followed the same practices in order to entice students to apply to their institution. In most cases, attracting the right number, or the right mix, of students was not a priority as state funding – often provided with minimal reporting requirements other than academic performance – ensured a constant stream of income to finance operations. In recent times, that appears to have changed. The national government has insisted on more representative student bodies, and has implemented strict budgetary constraints on tertiary educational spending, whilst ensuring that this is more equitably distributed amongst all public higher education institutions.

This has forced both traditional Universities and Universities of Technology to become more proactive and to more carefully manage which students are admitted into their respective institutions – academic standards and equity concerns appear to be more important than ever before. Owing to competitive pressures, institutions therefore need to become more proactive in their marketing endeavours (Wonders and Gyure, 1991; Zemsky *et al*, 2001) and, in response, many institutions have already turned to corporate principles to run their operation and to recruit their ‘customers’ (i.e. the students).

Traditionally, most higher education institutions in South Africa have been rather unprogressive in terms of marketing themselves to prospective students (Law, 2002) and the research market. Whilst they have acknowledged the need to feature in the media through advertising and public relations campaigns, as well as engaging in direct selling, most seem to have stopped short of embracing the true concept of marketing. This concept holds that “the key to achieving its organizational objectives consists of the company being more effective than competitors in creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value to its chosen target markets” (Kotler, 2004:19).

Arguably, the fundamental reason as to why this may be the case can be found in their heritage. Universities and Universities of Technology throughout South Africa were historically, as well as currently, supported to some extent by the national government. This has meant that they have not been exposed to truly competitive enterprise and are not accustomed to competing in an environment where survival, rather than being guaranteed, is a privilege that needs to be earned. Additionally, it appears as though few institutions have a comprehensive, institution wide, co-ordinated marketing programme. It would appear that at present, marketing is at best executed on an ad-hoc basis.

An exception to this norm may be the attitude of Universities and Universities of Technology toward their alumni and donor markets. These institutions appear to pay special attention to alumni in the hope that these graduates will act as fine ambassadors for the institution and, possibly more importantly, will provide future funding to the institution in the form of personal donations and/or donations from the companies/organizations at which they are employed.

Here, it would seem that many institutions have taken a significant leap forward and have fully embraced the concept of marketing by means of a relationship focus. Miller and Layton (1999:15) define relationship marketing as “build[ing] personal, long-term bonds with customers”. In this scenario, bi-directional communication is encouraged and alumni are sent newsletters on a regular basis, as well as being invited to attend formal functions at the institution, participate in sporting events, serve on committees, etc. This integrates them into the fold and makes these individuals feel part of an extended family. It therefore increases the likelihood that they will make future contributions to the institution as they start to see the institutional community as an extension of their own lives.

Another indication of the extent to which alumni are valued by institutions is the resources dedicated to remaining in contact with these individuals. One prominent South African university, for instance, has a separate unit overseeing this function. Their web site was professionally designed and database integrated at considerable cost. A full colour publication is also mailed to members on an annual basis. Membership benefits include discounts on institution-branded merchandise, reduced admission fees to certain exhibitions, the use of various facilities (e.g. conferencing rooms) on campus, the opportunity to network with other alumni, etc. Indeed, this particular institution appears to be most determined to retain alumni support and strengthen ties with this cohort. To this end, they have chosen to achieve this objective by building and strengthening ongoing relationships. There are a number of other institutions that function in a similar manner.

Unfortunately, it is thought that the same principles which have been successfully applied to alumni and donor markets can seldom be said to be in operation in the student recruitment market. In terms of recruiting students, most tertiary education institutions throughout South Africa have tended to adopt a rather dated approach consisting primarily of a combination of a mass marketing and a semi-direct marketing orientation. Essentially, this approach consists of standardized communication intended for large audiences, as well as customized content for targeting selected audiences, respectively.

In terms of mass marketing in the context of student recruitment, this includes the hard selling of the institution through mass media – particularly radio, newsprint and, to a lesser extent, television. One private college has even gone so far as to include cinema advertising as well. The message of the advertising is usually similar – it promotes the credibility of the institution by focusing on academic and discipline attributes, whilst promoting the desirability of the institution by emphasizing social attributes and, in essence, the enjoyment that awaits prospective students.

In terms of semi-direct marketing in the context of student recruitment, institutions are active in giving presentations to grade eleven and grade twelve (matric) scholars at their schools in order to promote the merits of their place of study. These presentations usually take the format of a persuasive oral, followed by a question-and-answer session. This also presents the opportunity for the institution to disseminate application forms to potential students should they display sufficient interest. This is classified as semi-direct marketing within the context of this dissertation, as it may be viewed more as focused mass marketing than true direct marketing.

It would appear that little effort has been intentionally made by South African tertiary education providers to personalize the student recruitment process. To this end, it is a fairly rare occurrence when relationship marketing techniques are used to improve the status quo. However, the lack of effort to implement a relationship marketing solution in a South African student recruitment context appears to differ remarkably from the scenario in several overseas markets, notably in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. In these countries, the merits of relationship marketing in the field of student recruitment are acknowledged, and such programmes are being developed across public and private higher education institutions alike.

In the local market, the most prominent of players to engage in fully fledged direct marketing initiatives appear to be the private institutions, which are classified as ‘for-profit institutions’ in the literature and are essentially private companies operating as a business in the higher education sector. These institutions do not benefit from government funding nor do they have the social responsibilities as assigned to public Universities and Universities of Technology. Thus, these companies have been forced to contend with market phenomena from the outset, yet some have thrived in the South African higher education environment and are starting to pose serious competition to well established public institutions.

It is becoming clear that public institutions will need to rapidly mature and realize that their marketplace is becoming increasingly competitive as private institutions enter the fray and

government subsidies remain static or even decline over time. Competition to acquire students, donations, research grants, etc. appears to be peaking and it seems long overdue for public institutions, especially, to improve their marketing efforts and seriously adopt the competitive challenge.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Competitive market forces appear to be exerting pressure on higher education institutions to adapt their traditional (i.e. mass and semi-direct marketing orientated) recruitment approach in order for them to effectively attract excellent academic prospects. To this end, it seems that a change in recruitment philosophy and practice may be necessary to avoid the uncertain outcome inherent in the traditional recruitment approach as outlined above. This approach implicitly assumes that the market will favourably respond to the institution's value proposition and places little emphasis on bi-directional relations at the application and pre-application phases. In this respect, relying on the reputation of the institution, effective advertising, a persuasive sales pitch, as well as a few special events, may no longer be sufficient to attract top achievers.

The research problem therefore serves to ascertain whether using a relationship marketing approach is conducive to the task of identifying, selecting, and recruiting highly desirable students. In this respect, particular emphasis is placed on whether these individuals are interested in establishing a pre-application relationship with a select number of institutions, as well as the benefits they hope to accrue from such relationships.

However, it may be optimal for the relationship marketing process to be used in tandem with the traditional approach. Thus, the two approaches – traditional and relationship marketing orientations – could be used in conjunction, as the former appears important in widening the net so that the element of exclusivity brought about by relationship marketing does not result in a decrease in the annual number of applicants. Hence, this consideration should also be addressed.



## **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **Primary**

- To establish if potential students actually want a relationship with higher education institutions prior to application and, if so, what benefits they wish to obtain from this relationship
- To determine whether institutions should seriously consider employing a relationship marketing approach to identify, select and finally recruit highly desirable undergraduate students

### **Secondary**

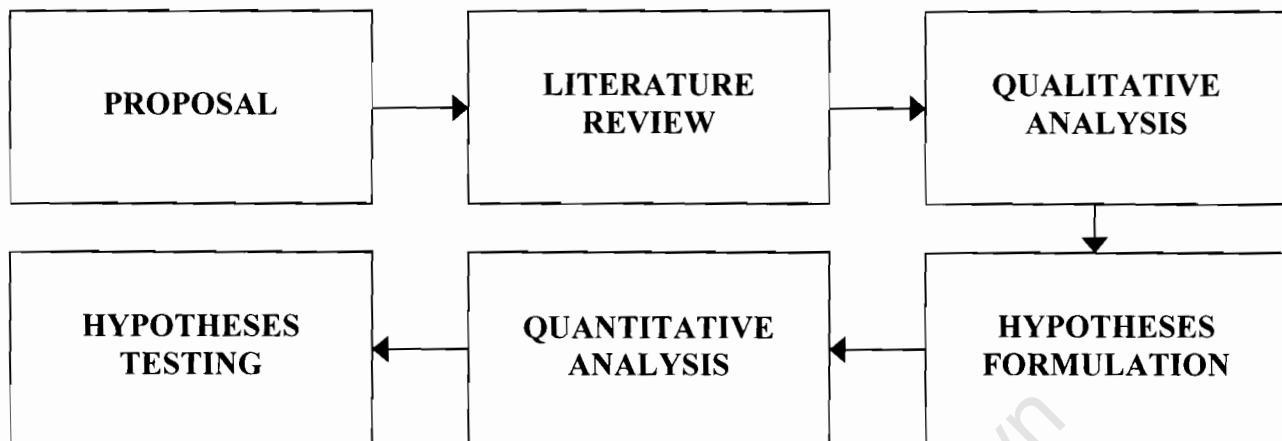
- To identify, and articulate the emphasis placed on, practices currently being utilized by South African tertiary education institutions to recruit undergraduate students
- To ascertain, and quantify the importance of, the factors which influence potential undergraduate students in their higher education study decisions
- To ascertain, and quantify the importance of, the parties who influence potential undergraduate students in their higher education study decisions

## **1.4 PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT**

The research process began with the formulation of a research proposal. This incorporated the background to the study, research problem, research objective, and scope and limitations. A literature review was then constructed, and comprehensive qualitative analysis conducted thereafter. Based on the research collected, hypotheses were constructed for testing at this point. The quantitative phase was then entered into, wherein a questionnaire was designed, validated, administered, and the results analysed. The hypotheses were then accepted or rejected based on the quantitative findings. Lastly, the final document was constructed which amalgamated all the

components devised during the course of the dissertation. This process leading to the compilation of the final document is illustrated in figure 1.1 below.

**Figure 1.1: An outline of the broad research phases**



## **1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

### **1.5.1 SCOPE**

This dissertation examines higher education student recruitment from a commercial marketing perspective and attempts to draw on contemporary marketing insights in order to provide suggested improvements to the tried-and-trusted (i.e. traditional) student recruitment process. However, it is acknowledged that the scope of the research is subject to two primary constraints. The first constraint is thought to be only covering major metropolitan areas and thereby predominantly focusing on ‘historically white’ institutions. The second constraint is thought to be limited access to individuals with knowledge of higher education student recruitment matters.

In terms of the geographic area, it is envisaged that this is a relatively insignificant bias and would not prevent the research results from being extrapolated with only a marginal deterioration in quality. Students from a multitude of regions in the country are likely to be included in the sample frame and interviews conducted with student recruitment professionals are likely to encapsulate their past experiences, as well as the experiences of their colleagues, at less affluent institutions outside major metropolitan areas.

In terms of accessing experts that possess in-depth knowledge of higher education student recruitment practices, it should be considered that these individuals may be reluctant to divulge confidential information which, if published, could allow other institutions to gain a competitive advantage. This essentially relates to the fact that this dissertation is not subject to confidentiality agreements and should eventually be entered into the public domain. However, it is thought that if multiple interviews are conducted with student recruitment professionals, the accumulated knowledge will be considerable. This is therefore not seen as a serious impediment to achieving the objectives of this study.

Finally, the consideration should be addressed that applying relationship marketing to student recruitment may be too restrictive a view, and one that does not fully appreciate the long term nature of this theoretical contribution to the discipline of marketing. Here, it may be argued that relationship marketing merits a lifetime view of the customer.

However, that acknowledged, it should be stressed that within this dissertation, the consideration of relationship marketing – from initiation of the relationship and beyond – is strictly performed within the microcosm of the student recruitment function itself. In this sense, it seems reasonable that only a specific timeframe of the relationship is analysed. To this end, this dissertation does not advocate that the relationship be terminated in any manner at the point at which the student recruitment function is complete. However, for the purposes of this research, the consideration of the relationship ends at this stage as this effectively becomes a crossover point whereby the prospective student becomes a registered student. This scenario is illustrated in figure 1.2 below.

**Figure 1.2: An extension of the traditional student relationship**

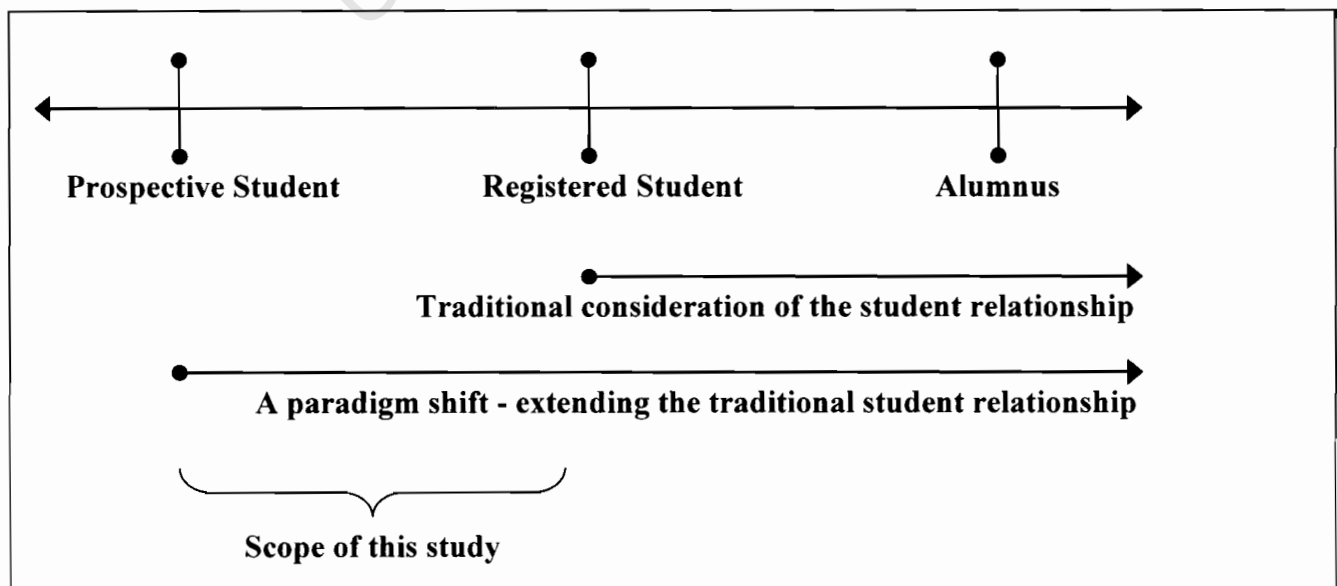


Figure 1.2 illustrates the view apropos extending the student relationship from the point at which the student is a prospect, rather than the point from which the student becomes registered at the institution. As highlighted above, the interim period between the ‘prospective student’ stage and the ‘registered student’ stage effectively constitutes the scope of this study.

### 1.5.2 LIMITATIONS

There are three notable limitations to this particular study.

Firstly, it remains questionable as to whether or not it is considered ethical to ‘cherry pick’ the market for the most desirable students. It may be argued that the primary function of a public University or University of Technology is to provide an education service for the benefit of the nation – not to merely act autonomously and aggressively by bolstering its intellectual and financial resources at any cost. The latter practice may be argued to be detrimental to other institutions in the vicinity and may therefore serve to detract from the higher education sector as a whole. However, this ethical debate seems more important from a policy perspective as opposed to a marketing perspective. As it is not directly applicable to the optimisation nature of the topic, it has not been explored in any significant depth.

Secondly, this dissertation does not aim to qualify or quantify what constitutes an excellent academic prospect. This is a subjective issue and the criteria are typically specific to each discipline of study. Thus, this study will not attempt to define the variables required for selecting such a student. However, it is thought that these variables would concentrate predominantly on the individual’s résumé (academic, sport, or community involvement wise) but may also extend to socio-economic and equity factors. These variables are at the discretion of the individual University or University of Technology and are therefore not prescribed in this dissertation.

Thirdly, it is not the intention of this dissertation to rate, rank or compare specific Universities or Universities of Technology. However, if institutions are alluded to for illustrative purposes (which may therefore serve to characterise them in some manner), it is acknowledged that this is a limited view and should therefore be regarded as a subjective assessment.

## 1.6 PROGRESSION OF THE DISSERTATION

This introductory chapter details the background to the topic, research problem, research objectives, and scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter two academically introduces the concept of marketing in higher education. It then proceeds to articulate the differing mindsets of administrators and academics alike toward the commercialization of higher education. The chapter then continues to discuss competitive pressures in the industry, as well as trends emerging within the South African higher education sector. Finally, it reviews some prominent long term marketing models which assist in providing perspective for the duration of this dissertation.

Chapter three builds on the discussion in the previous chapter by considering the concept of relationship marketing. It explores the constructs surrounding this theory, and then applies such insights to the higher education sector. Lastly, the chapter explores how the addition of *Information and Communications Technology* (ICT) can be incorporated into a relationship marketing framework to create a powerful platform with which to create, manage and enhance relationships.

Chapter four focuses on three prominent themes which may potentially be embraced by institutions to advance the student recruitment function, as well as possibly provide benefit to the functionality of a relationship orientated student recruitment programme. Brand management, youth marketing, and *Information and Communications Technology* are reviewed in this respect.

Chapter five introduces the discussion of the results from the qualitative analysis. This chapter considers the status quo of the student recruitment environment in South Africa. Specifically, this chapter includes an overview of professional mindsets, perceived competition, practices employed to attract students, and relationships between three critical parties in the student recruitment process. Subsequently, as a forerunner to the quantitative component of this study, this chapter also considers the institutions' views on potential enhancements to the student recruitment function. In this respect, the chapter considers the aspects of the process by which scholars are thought to select an institution, and the various pre- and post- application interactions between the institution and scholar in this respect. In essence, this provides a foundation for contemplating whether institutions are geared toward the adoption of relationship marketing as a means for future success in their student recruitment endeavours.

Chapter six reports on the hypotheses developed from the research to this point, and thereafter addresses the methodology employed for the quantitative component of the study.

Chapter seven presents the findings from the quantitative analysis. Essentially, the chapter resumes the discussion initiated in chapter five, yet considers these issues from the prospective students' perspective. Thus, the two frames of reference may be assimilated, and hence a balanced view of the student recruitment scenario obtained. Particular emphasis is placed in this chapter on the receptiveness of prospective students toward the potential establishment of a relationship orientated student recruitment programme. In this respect, it is envisaged that such insights – gathered from both sets of parties – may allow for an alignment of goals and therefore facilitate a stronger tendency toward fledgling relationships between institutions and noteworthy scholars.

Chapter eight completes the dissertation by highlighting a number of general conclusions based on the findings of the study. Furthermore, within this discussion, the hypotheses are revisited and outcomes obtained. Lastly, a number of recommendations are proposed as to the means in which tertiary education institutions can learn from this research and implement positive changes to improve, and hopefully optimize, their student recruitment marketing programmes.

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE MARKETING LANDSCAPE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION TO MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges which satisfy individual and organizational goals” (Lamb *et al*, 2004:6).

Another definition, as asserted by Perreault and McCarthy (2005:7), similarly concludes that the marketing function is orientated toward “the performance of activities that seek to accomplish an organization’s objectives by anticipating customer or client needs and directing a flow of need-satisfying goods and services from producer to consumer or client”.

However, one of the most comprehensive definitions may be offered by Kotler and Fox (1995:6), who describe marketing as the “analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programmes designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of value with target markets to achieve institutional objectives. Marketing involves designing the organization’s offerings to meet the target market’s needs and desires, using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate and service the markets.”

In South Africa, higher education is referred to as tertiary study post grade twelve (i.e. matric). This education may be acquired at a public University or University of Technology, or alternatively this may be acquired through a private tertiary education institution (often referred to in the literature as a ‘college’).

The study of marketing in higher education is dedicated to researching how marketing principles may be used in the sphere of higher education to more scientifically achieve strategic objectives. These objectives may take the form of promoting an institution, increasing its yield and/or quality of students, driving donor funding, or even tailoring the academic programmes to meet market requirements.

A common feature of all marketing definitions is the satisfying of stakeholder needs. In a higher education context, many stakeholders have been recognised: parents, alumni, donors, the community at large, the government and prospective employers, but the primary stakeholder is still the student (Scott, 1999; Wallace, 1999).



This dissertation therefore places emphasis at grass roots level, and examines the manner in which marketing can be used to satisfy the stated and latent needs of prospective students so as to entice them into a relationship with the institution and subsequently convert them into ‘customers’ (i.e. registered students).

This chapter examines the marketing landscape in higher education. Specifically, it analyses attitudes toward higher education and associated marketing practices, competitive pressures and trends in higher education, as well as long term customer-centric models.

## **2.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION AND ASSOCIATED MARKETING PRACTICES**

Sociologist Manuel Castells contends that tertiary education institutions fulfil five main functions. These are (a) to select ‘dominant elites’, (b) to provide these individuals with academic training, (c) to generate new knowledge through research, (d) to link knowledge in the institution to applied contexts through entrepreneurial activities, and (e) to act as part of the ideological apparatus of society (Castells, 2001). In order to achieve the above objectives, institutions need the necessary human capital. This human capital comprises both established academic figures as teachers and advanced researchers, and younger minds as undergraduate students, postgraduate students and junior researchers.

Marketing has typically been employed in higher education for two primary reasons: (a) to attract the most desirable students and, to a somewhat lesser degree, academic and administrative staff (i.e. intellectual resources); and (b) to attract government subsidies, research funding, private donations and grants, etc. (i.e. financial resources). However, it would appear that the practice of marketing in higher education in South Africa is a rather complex issue, where definitions of marketing ‘in the field’ appear to vary considerably. Although many academic institutions would like to believe that they are practicing true marketing and embracing corporate principles, it is thought that many are in fact falling short of the mark. This is discussed in greater detail in the later chapters of this dissertation.

Ed Ziegler, Director of University Marketing at Rowan University, claims that when higher education institutions use the term marketing, they actually mean promotion – brochures, direct mail, advertising, public relations efforts, etc. However, Ziegler contends that “marketing is more than ads and brochures. Marketing is a way of thinking that focuses on understanding and meeting

customer needs. What makes marketing so powerful is the market research, planning, and strategy that is done before getting to the promotion stage.” (Ziegler, 2002:160).

It is not an uncommon perception of institutions that marketing equates to little more than two factors – “many people think that marketing means selling or advertising” (Perreault and McCarthy, 2005:4). As a result, many administrators tend to use only the promotion elements of marketing like public relations, advertising and personal selling to increase enrolments (Ivy, 2002).

Noble (1986) summarized research which indicated very little progress in the professional management of the marketing programs of colleges and universities. He asserts that these institutions may be promoting selling, but very few are actually practicing marketing. Such work prompted institutions to heed this call and become more progressive. In turn, Buell (1996) noted that many colleges and universities had begun to hire marketing professionals and Mackey (1994) suggested that universities had started using many of the marketing techniques more commonly associated with consumer product markets.

Schwartz (1993) and Rogers (1998) have detailed the aggressive efforts of some leading universities, including Northwestern University and Cambridge University, to market themselves using a variety of promotional tools such as advertising and direct marketing. However, Cetin (2003) questions the extent to which progress has been made to date, instead asserting that tertiary education institutions still suffer from too little marketing.

It would appear that this semi-passive stance by institutions toward adopting a comprehensive marketing strategy, although effective to a degree at present, may have serious short-comings in the future as the higher education industry becomes increasingly competitive (Zemsky *et al*, 2001). Indeed, it is apparent that the rules of the game are being re-written – practices that have historically achieved success have no guarantee of doing so in the future.

Part of the problem seems to emanate from the attitudes held by academics toward the marketing discipline (Kirp, 2004). In this respect, Smith *et al* (1995) contend that few academics originate from a marketing background and in most cases do not have a thorough understanding of the discipline. For this reason, they hold a negative attitude toward marketing. Nonetheless, it appears rather ironic that many institutions may preach the virtues of marketing to their business management students, yet fail to realise the implications this has for their own institution.

Johnson (1996:73) produced results that showed disengagement of academics from the process of marketing. She concluded that “some academics will accept the market and with it marketing, albeit perhaps in a rather limited way. Others in varying degrees may see marketing as incompatible with their ideological perspective. Others may accept the pragmatic. Few if any see it as an activity to which they should give any more than nominal attention. None saw it in the wider ‘relationship marketing’ terms.”

Piyushi Kotecha, former CEO of the South African Vice-Chancellors Association (SAUVCA), conducted research on the topic of branding activities of South African higher education institutions. He concluded that “while many academic staff may understand this concept in theory, branding smacks of something vulgar and market related. [...] The sustained myth that surrounds institutions is that branding is not needed when the institution has a solid reputation and long tradition.” (Kotecha, 2003:4). Kotecha subsequently suggests the notion that institutions that proactively market themselves are seen as admitting to being deficient in some manner. This appears to be a mindset that will need attention before lasting damage is affected.

Kotecha (2003:4) contends that “the roots of this perception can be traced back into the origins of the university where it consciously established itself as an institution on the margins of society without ever belonging entirely to that society. It continues to believe that for the university to produce new kinds of knowledge through research, it could not afford to be compromised by outside interests.” He does however acknowledge that the above may be a red herring with the real reason being sheer arrogance on the institution’s behalf. That recognised, an alternate view, one supported by the author, suggests that institutions are merely conservative by nature. In short, they resist change and are therefore slow to adapt to market conditions.

It is also claimed that the adoption of the marketing concept into an unconventional sector, such as higher education, can create problems, particularly if the meaning of marketing is misunderstood or inappropriately applied. Carlson (1992), Fisk and Allen (1993), and Wonders and Gyuere (1991), amongst others, have recognised the increasingly important role marketing is playing in higher education institutions’ efforts to attract new students. Yet, they found that there was a general lack of understanding as to what marketing actually meant.

McGrath (2002) points to further research to assess the marketing landscape in higher education.

Taylor and Darling (1991) surveyed 111 college deans from different academic fields concerning their attitudes, finding that these professionals largely supported the need for marketing, but

questioned what impact it had on improving the overall quality of their institutions. Michael *et al* (1993) interviewed 96 Canadian higher education officials and found that only a minority actively engaged in marketing research and the development of marketing plans. Kittle (2000) surveyed professionals at 59 institutions, focusing on their attitudes toward advertising-related issues such as media usage and the relative importance of different target audience groups.

McGrath (2002:5) concluded that “there seems to be an opportunity to break new ground by investigating which institutional functional area is responsible for marketing efforts in colleges and universities, and then to attempt to measure the perceived effectiveness of these functional areas in implementing marketing efforts”.

It may be argued that the primary function of the higher education marketing team is to build the institutional brand. In this respect, it is thought that the image portrayed by institutions of higher education plays a critical role in the attitudes of the institution’s publics toward itself (Landrum *et al*, 1998; Yavas and Shemwell, 1996). According to Kirp (2004), the institutional brand is synonymous with its reputation – regarded as a prize asset by most prestigious higher education institutions.

Likewise, Paramewaran and Glowacka (1995) in their study of university image found that higher education institutions need to maintain or develop a distinct image to create a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive market.

However, much of the institutional branding remains clichéd and highly unoriginal. Where branding does exist, there are a number of common constructs which appear ad nauseam i.e. the ideas of excellence, reputation and tradition. It is also quite expected for the imagery to predominantly feature the physical space that the institution occupies (Kotecha, 2003).

Kotecha (2003) suggests that within South Africa, private institutions changed the branding landscape during the 1990s by selling an ‘experience’ (even a lifestyle) as opposed to old buildings, smiling student faces, and impressive library collections. The rationale behind this approach was to market the institution as a place of both learning (perceived as work) and socializing (having fun). It is thought that this balance became important to recruit students who may have been considering tertiary education as a means to an end, rather than the start of an academic or professional career. Other students may simply have been interested in engaging in tertiary studies to delay the inevitable prospect of having to pursue a full-time job.

Despite the differing viewpoints, it appears that contemporary views suggest that the need for marketing in higher education definitely exists. Underscoring this is the extent to which higher education is becoming commercialized in the literature. For example, Bay and Daniel (2001) contend that universities with a large number of international students are referred to as ‘export industries’ (Gatfield, 1998), courses are termed ‘educational products’ (Adler, 1998), new instruction methods such as Internet courses are referred to as ‘distribution methods’ (Gatfield, 1998), and other institutions are referred to as ‘competitors’ (Landrum *et al*, 1998). Furthermore, potential students are sometimes referred to as the ‘customer base’ (Browne *et al*, 1998; Licata and Maxham, 1998), returning students are called ‘repeat business’ (Nichols *et al*, 1998), and attempts to determine to what extent the institution is meeting the students’ perceived needs are related to ‘customer satisfaction’ (Licata and Maxham, 1998).

Present attitudes toward marketing in higher education appear to be converging around a single idea – the student is not to be taken for granted. This suggests that marketing can, and will, play a vital role in creating appeal and subsequently recruiting students into the institution.

## **2.3 COMPETITIVE PRESSURES AND TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Institutions face a plethora of issues and challenges in the current era of higher education endeavours. In this respect, institutions are “being urged to provide high quality education, exist as a well-reputed university, achieve enrolment success, improve competitive positioning, provide contemporary and well-designed academic programs, and maintain financial strength. Further, strategic planning and media management for providing earnest information to internal markets, stakeholders, supplier markets, prospective markets, national and international platforms, and to the community at large have to be accurately designed and implemented.” (Cetin, 2003:57-58).

It appears that competition among academic institutions has escalated recently, particularly with the emergence of financial and budgeting limitations, and a greater call for accountability among these institutions (Daughdrill, 1994). This has forced administrators at institutions of higher education to begin to recognize that they need to function more like a business and market their offerings utilizing sound strategies (Hancock and McCormick, 1996).

Higher education around the world has experienced rapid growth and, under the pressure of obtaining sufficient funds, it has had to become a “big business enterprise” (Liu, 1998:19). Zemsky

*et al* (2001:1) concur with this sentiment: “People talk about markets, whether or not they understand them. Most people are also uncomfortable with what they see, or think they see: students using the power of their purchases to define what they need to learn, faculty and departments overly sensitive to things that sell as opposed to ideas that matter, and administrations adopting policies and practices of businesses in order to make a quintessentially messy endeavour more efficient. Everywhere the byword is *competition* – competition for students, for faculty, for research dollars, for donors, etc. The market now matters in higher education.”

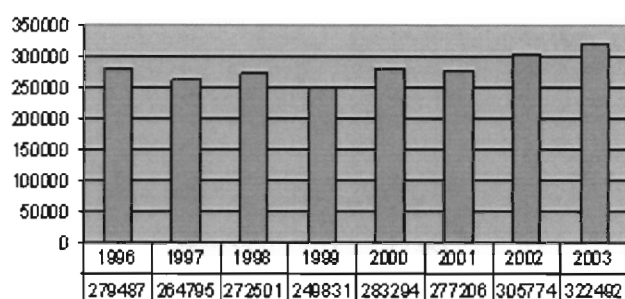
This global situation is no different to that in South African. Here, public institutions are facing changes in government funding methods, globalisation of higher education is bringing new competitors into the fray, and applications from new students at some institutions is actually declining (Tagwireyi, 2000).

Table 2.1 and figures 2.1 and 2.2 quantify and illustrate the competitive scenario in terms of recruiting students into the South African higher education sector between 1996 and 2003.

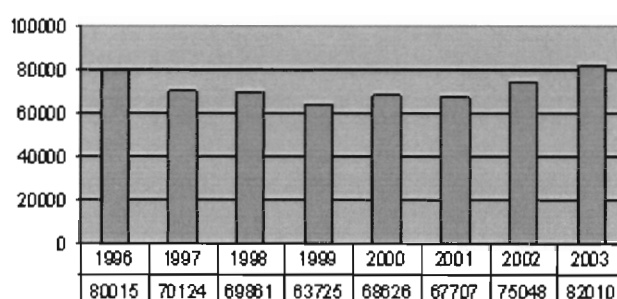
**Table 2.1: Matriculation statistics between 1996 and 2003**

Year	Number of candidates	Pass		Exemption	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1996	518 225	279 487	54	80 015	15
1997	559 233	264 795	47	70 127	13
1998	552 862	272 501	49	69 861	13
1999	511 474	249 831	49	63 725	12.5
2000	489 941	283 294	57.9	68 626	14
2001	449 371	277 206	61.7	67 707	15.1
2002	443 821	305 774	68.9	75 048	16.9
2003	440 267	322 492	73.3	82 010	18.6

**Source: Department of Education (2004)**

**Figure 2.1: Matric passes (1996-2003)**

Source: Department of Education (2004)

**Figure 2.2: Matric exemptions (1996-2003)**

Source: Department of Education (2004)

The data reveals that the pass rate of matric candidates actually dropped between 1996 and 1999, yet has been increasing phenomenally since these years. The pass rate has improved from 49% in 1999 to 73.3% in 2003.

Matric exemption candidates – those candidates eligible to apply to a South African university – in 1996 numbered 80 015, yet decreased year-on-year until 2000 when that output began to rise. Between 1999 and 2003, this output rose from 63 725 to 82 010 students, marking an increase of 28.7% in the size of the pool of potential university students in only four years.

In student recruitment terms, this means that despite the shrinkage in the pool of potential students between 1996 and 2000, the target market has grown somewhat impressively subsequent to this period.

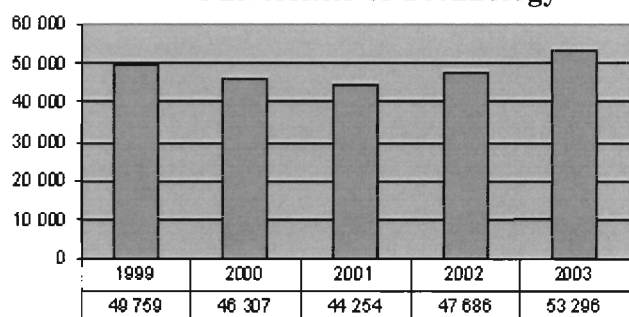
Table 2.2 and figures 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 quantify and illustrate the number of students entering public higher education institutions between 1999 and 2003.

**Table 2.2: Students entering public higher education institutions between 1999 and 2003**

	Universities of Technology	Percentage change	Universities	Percentage change	Total	Percentage change
1999	49 759	Unavail	52 307	Unavail	102 066	Unavail
2000	46 307	-6.94	60 291	15.26	106 598	4.44
2001	44 254	-4.43	68 528	13.66	112 782	5.80
2002	47 686	7.76	73 827	7.73	121 513	7.74
2003	53 296	11.76	77 740	5.30	131 036	7.84

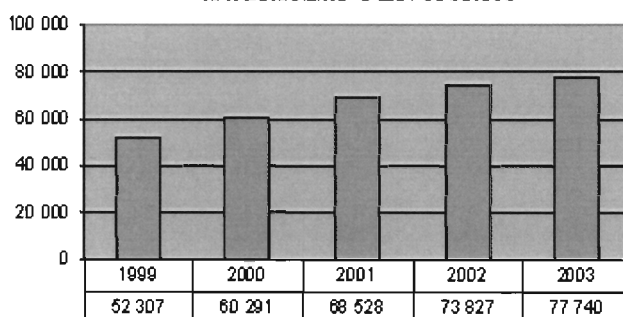
Source: Department of Education (2004)

**Figure 2.3: Entering students – Universities of Technology**



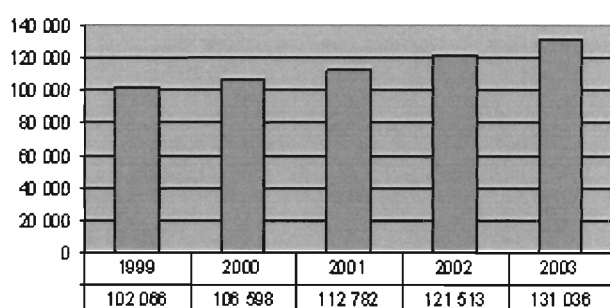
Source: Department of Education (2004)

**Figure 2.4: Entering students – traditional Universities**



Source: Department of Education (2004)

**Figure 2.5: Public higher education sector:**



Source: Department of Education (2004)

The data reveals that students entering traditional Universities has increased year-on-year (between 1999 and 2003) in real terms, yet the growth rate has slowed from 15.26% in 2000 to 5.3% in 2003. In contrast, public Universities of Technology observed a decrease in the number of entering students between 1999 and 2001, yet a reversal of this trend was initiated in 2002 and the growth rate appears to be increasing impressively. This could indicate a trend, started in 2001, in favour of Universities of Technology and against traditional Universities.

In terms of overall students entering public institutions, it appears that numbers and growth rates have been tending upwards since 1999. The conclusion may therefore be drawn that, in recent years, Universities of Technology have been driving growth whilst traditional Universities have potentially been inhibiting growth.

Table 2.3 and figure 2.6, on the following page, summarise and illustrate the quantitative indicators of secondary education output and tertiary education input, reveal telling trends.

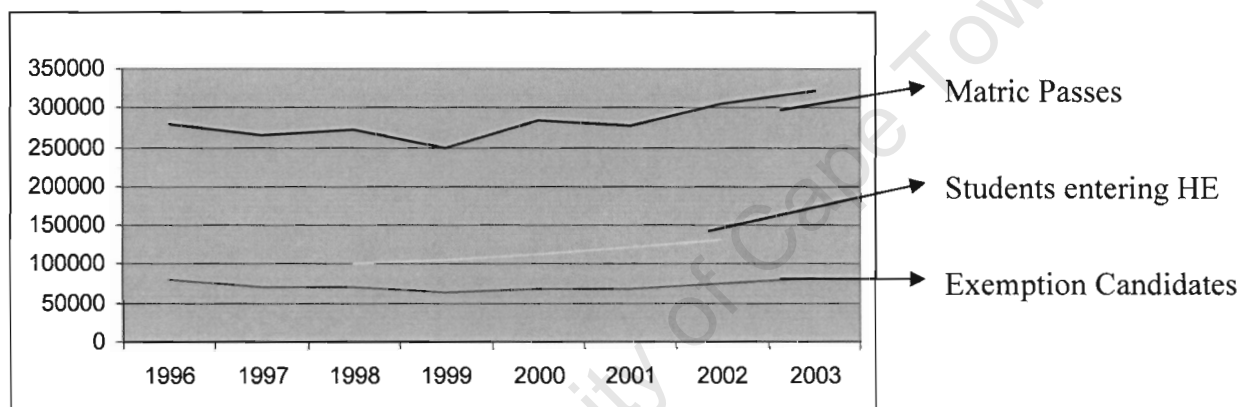


**Table 2.3: A summary of secondary education output and tertiary education input**

	Pass Output	Exemption Candidates	Students entering public HE the following year
<b>1996</b>	279 487	80 015	Unavailable
<b>1997</b>	264 795	70 127	Unavailable
<b>1998</b>	272 501	69 861	102 066
<b>1999</b>	249 831	63 725	106 598
<b>2000</b>	283 294	68 626	112 782
<b>2001</b>	277 206	67 707	121 513
<b>2002</b>	305 774	75 048	131 036
<b>2003</b>	322 492	82 010	Unavailable

Source: Department of Education (2004)

**Figure 2.6: Matric passes v.s. Exemption candidates v.s. Students entering higher education**



Source: Department of Education (2004)

The data represented in table 2.3 and figure 2.6 reveals fluctuations in the output of matriculants between 1996 and 2003, while the matriculation exemption output comprises a considerably smoother trend. Both curves appear to be upward sloping from 1999 onwards. The trend concerning students entering public higher education institutions is reflected here as a smooth, upward sloping curve. It is therefore evident that the target market, and student bodies, of public higher education institutions are both growing steadily.

International research suggests that these trends, in broad terms, are being reflected worldwide. The trend to acquire a tertiary education has taken hold and minority groups, particularly, are being enticed to enter the higher education market in a quest to empower themselves and better their lives (Parvianinen, 2003).

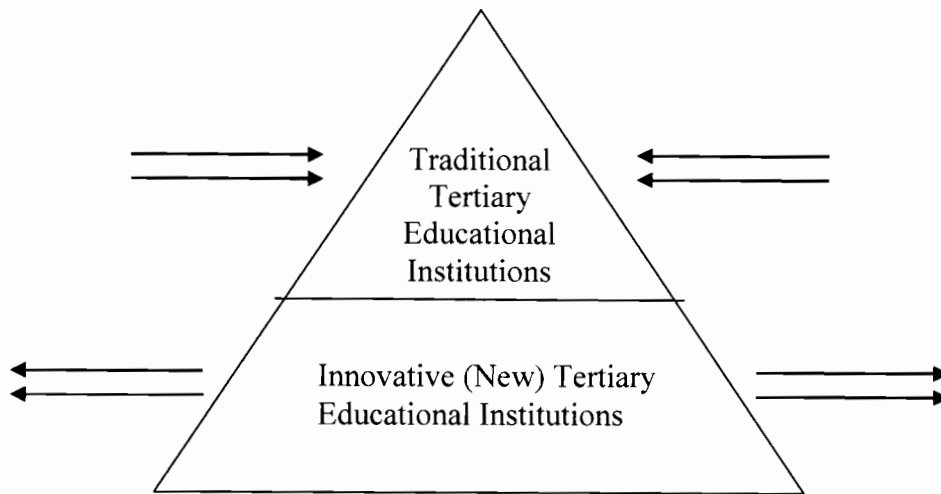
It would therefore appear that school leavers are rapidly realizing the need to acquire a tertiary education if they are to lead comfortable lives in the future. Hence, emphasis is being placed on continuing studies, as opposed to immediately entering the workplace, post matriculation. This is a change in mindset from only a few decades ago when the mentality was that a tertiary education was a bonus. Nowadays, a tertiary education is deemed as being essential if an individual aspires to reach middle or upper level management (Parvianinen, 2003).

However, this demand is being met by an adequate supply of tertiary education providers in both the public and private spheres. Mainstay educational providers, for example the larger public institutions, are in fact expanding facilities to accommodate increasingly large intakes of students (Kenyon, 2004), and new players in the higher education market are adopting sophisticated marketing techniques to persuade matriculants to study at their institution instead of the competition. Both sets of parties are effectively competing for the same pool of potential customers and the marketing muscle of 'for-profit' institutions is forcing 'non-profit' institutions to respond accordingly. For instance, Professor Colin Bundy, former Vice-Chancellor at the University of the Witwatersrand, reports that the booming private higher education sector was responsible for the fact that white enrolments at Universities and Universities of Technology fell in five years by 41 000, or 19%, in the mid nineties (Bundy, 2002).

Furthermore, Newsclip Media Monitoring (2002) reports that specialist education providers such as cookery schools, bible colleges and film colleges are also making inroads into the market and are now attracting interest from a growing number of top achievers. Historically, this would have been an abnormal scenario as the upper end of the academic achiever spectrum was strongly assumed to attend one of the elite public universities.

As per Newsclip Media Monitoring (2002), figure 2.7, on the following page, indicates the pressures that appear to be being exerted on conventional (typically public) academic institutions, and the favourable market sentiment currently enjoyed by specialist institutions.

**Figure 2.7: Forces acting on higher education service providers**



**Source: Adapted from Newsclip Media Monitoring (2002)**

Figure 2.7 alludes to the syndrome whereby market forces are placing pressure on traditional tertiary education institutions to adapt to the demands of the market. In some instances, as outlined earlier in this chapter, this has equated to decreased enrolment at certain institutions. It is thought that this may be attributed to an undesirable educational product, or bad marketing thereof. It would appear that these institutions need to transform themselves in order to regain their previously held favourable market status. On the other hand, some innovative tertiary educational institutions, offering new educational products or those which the market has learned to appreciate, are experiencing increased demand and are positively exerting themselves on the market.

Seemingly, it is no longer a foregone conclusion that students will apply to study at a specific institution because there has always been demand in the past. Shifting demographics, fluctuating student preferences and even changing requirements in the job market are fundamentally affecting the status quo (Wilms and Moore, 1987). Similarly, government funding, research grants and donations from alumni are no longer being taken for granted by institutions, as these are becoming increasingly precious as the competition for such income streams intensifies.

Law (2002), analysing higher education marketing in South Africa, finds that there is large scope for improvement in the marketing programmes being executed and that significant benefits will accrue to those brave enough to be progressive on this front.

Levitt (1969) summarises the notion that many higher education marketers have believed for some time. He maintains that the new competition is not between what educational institutions offer in

the classroom, but between what they add to their standard offerings in the form of packaging, services, advertising, financing, delivery arrangements, and other add-ons that consumers value.

Indeed, the higher education market in present times resembles a corporate environment where demand and supply determine the winners and losers. Furthermore, no single factor is entirely responsible for success, and institutions need to know where strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats lie. Both national and international trends point in the same direction – there is an ongoing battle for most institutions to survive – growth in the current competitive climate, it would appear, is a luxury.

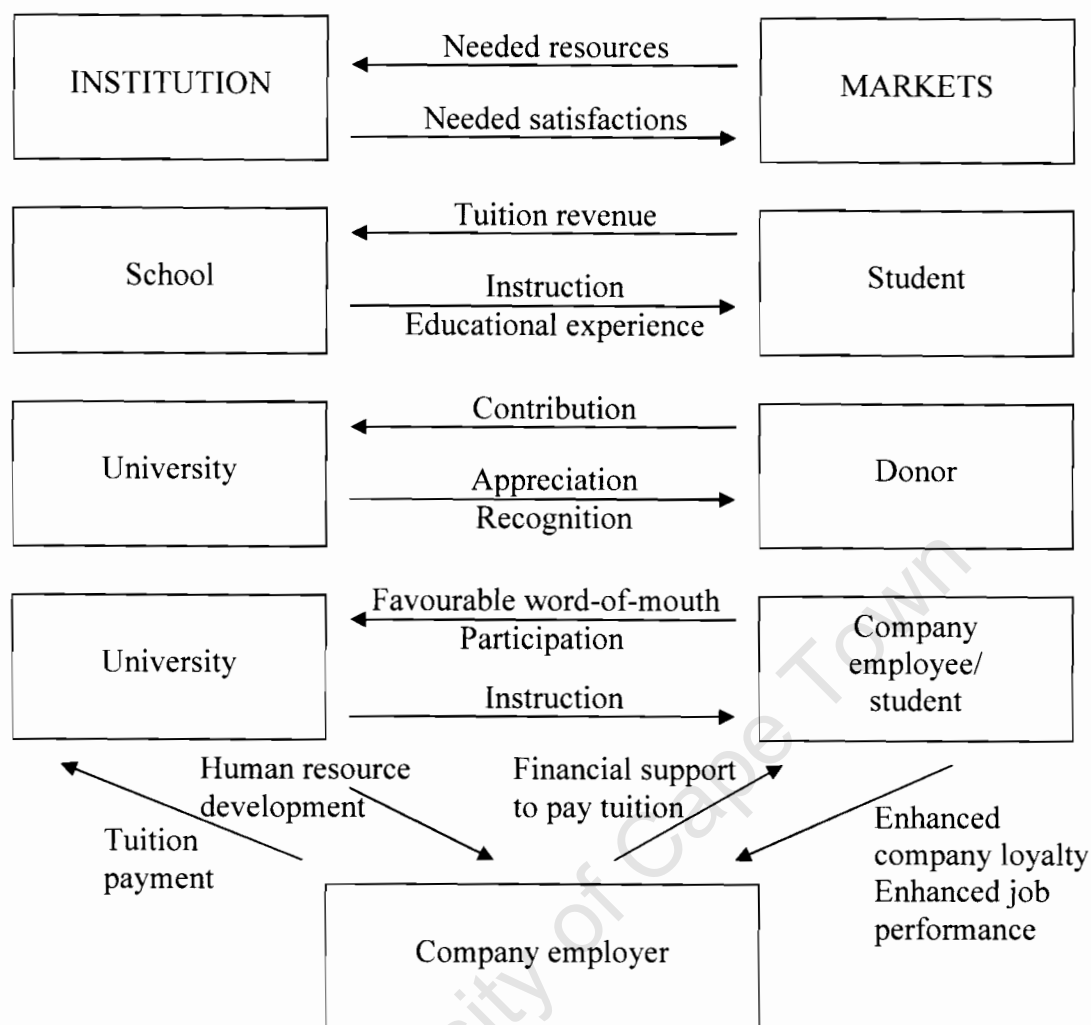
The following section considers interactions between institutions and their ‘customers’ with respect to the possibility of building a sustainable competitive advantage by means of a relationship focus.

## **2.4 ESTABLISHING A LIFETIME VIEW OF THE ‘CUSTOMER’**

As higher education institutions realise the merits of marketing, they gain a better appreciation that students deserve attention over a longer timeframe than previously anticipated. This is congruent with the view of several authors (e.g. Christopher *et al*, 1991; Kotler and Fox, 1995; Peck *et al*, 1999) that a lifetime view of the individual should be adopted – ascending through the stages of ‘prospect’ to ‘partner’.

Kotler and Fox (1995) articulate the exchanges that occur between institutions and the various markets they serve. This is represented in figure 2.8 on the following page.

**Figure 2.8: Exchanges between an educational institution and its various markets**



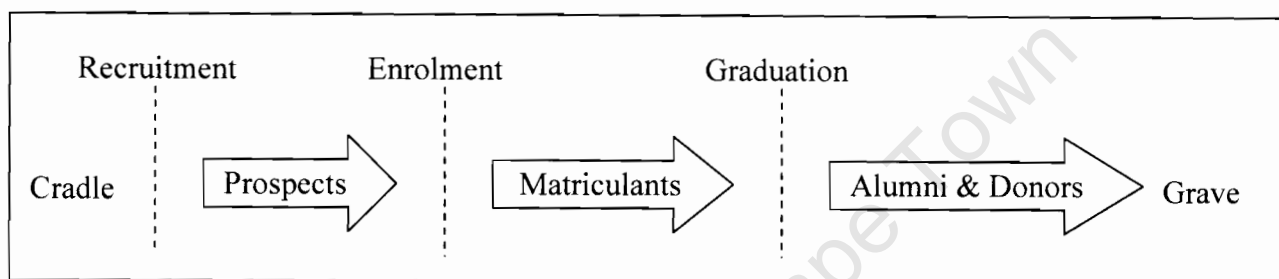
**Source: Kotler and Fox (1995:7)**

At the first level, an institution draws intellectual capacity from its environment (the market) and delivers educational produce back to the market. At the second level, the institution collects tuition fees from students and provides them with direct educational instruction in return. At a third level, the institution accepts funds from donors and acknowledges this through expressions and tokens of appreciation. At a fourth level, the institution interacts with companies (employers in the market) and their employees to provide these individuals with further education, for which the respective company foots the bill. The company receives human resource development and pays the institution student fees in return. The employee, in turn, develops loyalty toward the company and may even be incentivized by it to develop his/her skills through the provision of financial support covering the duration of his/her studies.

This framework provides a basic insight into the interactions which take place between an institution and the various stakeholders it serves. Exchanges may be simple or complex, and exchanges can occur with the same individual, in various capacities, throughout his/her lifetime. It is therefore imperative that good relationships are developed whenever exchange occurs – this facilitates, and maximises, the opportunity for future exchanges, possibly on a grander scale.

Another model, Oblinger's (2003) student lifecycle model, involves viewing the student, specifically, throughout his/her lifetime, from the cradle to the grave. This is depicted in figure 2.9 below.

**Figure 2.9: Oblinger's Student Lifecycle Model**



**Source: Oblinger (2003:2)**

The earliest stage of an individual's relationship with the institution may be as a prospect. This is typically during the individual's high school years, but may be even earlier in the case of a parent working at the institution, for example.

The next stage of the lifecycle is the institution accommodating him/her as a student and ensuring that (s)he graduates with the desired credentials and in the desired timeframe, whilst maximizing positive experiences and minimizing negative experiences. This period is critical and is likely to make or break the possibility of a long term relationship into the future.

The following stage of the lifecycle is post graduation, or the alumnus stage. In many cases, the cycle becomes full circle through alumni because their children and grandchildren frequently become prospects themselves.

The ultimate stage of the lifecycle may be to leverage alumni loyalty into financial income for the institution through converting these alumni into donors as well. Although donors may not exclusively be alumni, they also have a relationship with the institution – one that can often be sustained and strengthened over time.

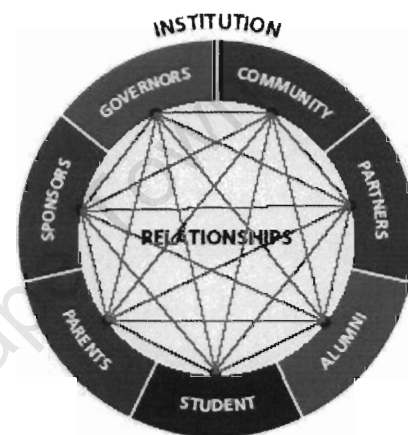
It is important for institutions to recognize these specific stages of the lifecycle. Increasingly, the key to institutional advantage is to optimize the relationship focus in each phase and ensure a long term relationship develops. Similar to Oblinger’s (2003) model, BearingPoint (2003) advocates the student-for-life relationship model.

BearingPoint (2003:2) maintains that “by creating effective student-for-life relationships, colleges and universities can position themselves to build value with each of these interactions.”

The BearingPoint (2003) model illustrates the connection held between the institution and its stakeholders, listed below:

1. Governments
2. Communities
3. Partners
4. Alumni
5. Students
6. Parents
7. Sponsors/Donors

**Figure 2.10: BearingPoint’s Relationship Model**



**RELATIONSHIP MODEL**

**Source: BearingPoint (2003:3)**

This is depicted in figure 2.10 to the right.

All of these stakeholders are thought of as the institution’s customers – it is therefore important for the institution to maintain good relationships with each and every party. “Their unique, collective and interrelated perceptions of the institution, over the short and long terms, can prove critical in enabling the institution to achieve its core mission of identifying, attracting and retaining students – and of building lifetime relationships with them.” (BearingPoint, 2003:2).

As mentioned previously, it is highly likely that a number of individuals will fall into more than one category. For instance, a student could become an alumnus and a donor, then send his/her children to the institution, thereby being considered by the institution as a parent too. It is also highly possible that an alumnus may obtain work in the government or at one of the institution’s partners – thereby carrying forward a relationship. The interconnection between these parties therefore takes on a critical dimension, whereby these relationships are essentially responsible for the success or failure of the institution over the long term.

BearingPoint (2003:7) suggests that a successful student lifetime management strategy may bring about the following benefits:

- Increased *tuition revenue* and *donations*
- Decreased costs of *student recruitment* and *fund raising*
- Decreased number of *complaints*
- Increased *efficiency*
- Increased *student and alumni satisfaction*

These points would appear to be amongst the key concerns of higher education marketers and therefore highly desirable benefits if they could indeed be achieved.

Collectively, the BearingPoint (2003), Kotler and Fox (1995), and Oblinger (2003) models all point to competitive advantage being attained through establishing long term relationships with students and other key stakeholders, with the intention of continuously creating positive experiences throughout the course of their respective lifetimes.

## **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The primary findings within this chapter include the phenomena that the worldwide tertiary education market is becoming increasingly competitive, prospective students appear to be more accepting of new and unconventional types of learning institutions as viable alternatives to mainstream institutions, marketing as a tool for success is increasingly being recognized and adopted by institutions, and that institutions would be advised to consider students as ‘lifetime customers’ and to view the relationship in the corresponding light.

Chapter three continues the discussion of the relationship between student and institution by pursuing a theoretical and applied examination of the area of relationship marketing in the higher education sector.



# CHAPTER THREE

## RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION TO RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

It would appear that the majority of research to date on relationship marketing has focused on ‘for-profit’ firms and their relationships with stakeholders. However, it may be argued that ‘non-profit’ organizations, notwithstanding higher education institutions, face similar competitive forces that make relationship marketing an attractive strategy for many ‘for-profit’ firms (Arnett *et al*, 2003b).

To this end, it seems likely that higher education fits the profile of organizations that can benefit from relationship marketing. Relationship marketing can thus act as a facilitator for building long term commitments to students, donors, grant-funders, and communities (Tomer, 1998). Supporting this notion is the argument that public higher education institutions may best be classified as stable service providers, as opposed to being primarily dependent upon opportunistic transactions to operate (Gibbs and Knapp, 2002).

In a community context, relationship marketing can serve to enhance the local environment by means of the institution becoming more aware of, and responsive to, community needs. This should result in the honing of the offering to meet the needs of the constituency, and also lead to increased and repeated exchanges with donors, as well as grant and contract funders (Gibbs and Knapp, 2002). In this respect, Grönroos (2004) contends that relationship marketing adds value to a service.

Similarly, Dirks (1998) contends that a relationship marketing approach focuses upon close communication and interaction with the consumer over time in order to tailor the value in offerings to suit customer needs. He reckons that institutions that adopt such an approach toward students, for example, should exhibit reduced exit transfers, greater completion rates, and increased long term student commitment. This is congruent with the themes of communication and interaction, as asserted by Grönroos (2004), to be principle components of the thrust of relationship marketing.

In effect, it may be argued that each semester’s registration of students actually represents repeat business from these individuals. Gibbs and Knapp (2002) contend that students have ‘mobility’ in terms of their ability to transport course credits from one institution to another. For this reason, institutions need to be concerned about the retention issue and therefore ensure that student needs are indeed adequately met. They therefore assert that relationship marketing is critical in the context of increasing customer perceived value (a view echoed by Grönroos, 2004), as many institutions become plagued with overly bureaucratic systems and higher than anticipated student fees.

It would therefore appear that relationship marketing merits research as a possible means to enhance the marketing efforts of a tertiary education institution. For this reason, the topic will be explored and applied to a higher education environment. Additionally, relationship marketing will be examined with respect to its possible integration into a student recruitment strategy.

### **3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING**

Over the past decade, many organizations have come to realize that relationships with customers, and even potential customers, are absolutely critical. This appears to be a clear mind shift away from *transactional marketing*, which held the view that maximum benefit should be extracted from the customer base in the short term.

Supporting the above sentiments, Boon and Kurtz (2005:164) define relationship marketing as “the development, growth, and maintenance of cost-effective, high value relationships with individual customers, suppliers, distributors, retailers and other partners for mutual benefit over time”. Kotler (2004:13) adds that “relationship marketing builds strong economic, technical, and social ties among the parties. It cuts down on transaction costs and time. In the most successful cases, transactions move from being negotiated each time to being a matter of routine.”

Grönroos (1994:9), in a similar vein, states that “relationship marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance and when necessary also terminate relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties are met, and that this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises”.

In the context of this dissertation, it is suggested that Grönroos’ (1994:9) definition is the more suitable to be modified – as follows – for the student recruitment environment: *Relationship marketing is to identify, establish, maintain and enhance relationships with students – the lifeblood of the institution – and other key constituents, so as to benefit the institution both financially and intellectually, whilst simultaneously ensuring that the other parties’ objectives are met, and that this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises.*

Berry (2002) echoes that relationship marketing is concerned with attracting, maintaining and building customer relationships, and claims that it is regarded by many scholars as the paradigm shift of the 1990’s (Ballantyne, 1994; Buttle, 1996; Grönroos, 1994; Juttner and Wehrli, 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2002). Therefore, it is not surprising that relationship marketing is a strategy

that has been examined intensively in the marketing literature and has been adopted by many organizations (Arnett *et al*, 2003a).

Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) suggest that relationship marketing is based on the view that many of the exchanges involved in marketing are not of the discrete, arms-length, 'transactional' variety, but rather are long in duration and reflect an ongoing relationship-development process. These relational exchanges are increasingly being viewed by marketers as resources that can lead to long term competitive advantages for organizations (Hunt, 1997; Hunt, 2000; Hunt *et al*, 2002).

Relationship marketing also advocates a shift in focus from attracting new customers to retaining current customers and fostering repeat business (Berry, 2002; Grönroos, 1994; Jackson, 1985; Juttner and Wehrli, 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2002). Under this framework, attracting new customers becomes a secondary objective (Berry, 2002), with the primary objective being to maintain these long term relationships by encouraging customers to ascend through stages of customer loyalty, from 'prospect' to 'partner' (Christopher *et al*, 1991; Peck *et al*, 1999). Essentially, relationship marketing advocates a conscious effort to know the customer (Aijo, 1996) and provide an incentive for the individual to remain with the service provider or give the individual reasons not to change allegiance (Berry, 2002).

It may therefore be surmised that a goal of relationship marketing is to enhance customer satisfaction over a period of time. Customer satisfaction is an output, which results from the customer's comparison of expected performance in pre-purchase phase with perceived performance in the post-purchase phase (Churchill and Suprenant, 1982). The literature would suggest that customer satisfaction may be viewed from two different perspectives: transaction-specific satisfaction and overall, or relational, satisfaction (Yi, 1991). The transaction-specific satisfaction of the concept concerns customer satisfaction as the assessment made by a choice after a specific purchase occasion. Relational satisfaction refers to the customer's overall satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the brand based on all encounters and experiences with it (Johnson and Fornell, 1991). In fact, overall satisfaction can be viewed as a function of all previous transaction-specific satisfactions (Jones and Suh, 2000). The overriding result of this is high customer loyalty (Brady and Robertson, 2001). In this context, it may be assumed that the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is positive.

Oliver (1997) defines loyalty as a deeply held commitment to buy or repeatedly patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same

brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour. In order for a firm to create customer loyalty it should increase customers' satisfaction by raising service quality (Brady and Robertson, 2001; Fornell *et al*, 1996), ensuring that customers trust the firm (Fournier, 1998; Lau and Lee, 1999; Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and forming/enhancing switching costs, thereby making it relatively expensive for customers to take their business elsewhere (Bloemer *et al*, 1998; Burnham *et al*, 2003; Jones *et al*, 2002).

In summary, Arnett *et al* (2003b) contend that characteristics that have contributed to relationship marketing success include commitment (Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Ganesan, 1994; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), trust (Moorman *et al*, 1993; Moorman *et al*, 1992; Morgan and Hunt 1994), communication (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Mohr and Nevin, 1990), co-operation (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Stern and El-Ansary, 1992), mutual goals (Heide and John, 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), shared value and norms (Heide and John, 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), social bonds (Han *et al*, 1993; Wilson, 1995), adaptation (Hakansson, 1982; Hallen *et al*, 1991) and satisfaction (Dwyer *et al*, 1987; Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Wilson 1995).

The following section of this dissertation examines a number of frameworks to build upon the elementary relationship marketing theory introduced above.

### **3.3 FRAMEWORKS FOR ARTICULATING RELATIONSHIP MARKETING THEORY**

Relationship Marketing is further explored by Schriver (1997), who maintains that customers are less loyal than in the past due to six major forces:

- *The abundance of choice*

Consumer demand has created a wide variety and deep assortment of products across the board.

- *Availability of information*

Modern technology such as cellular telephones and the Internet has made it easy for consumers to compare goods and services prior to purchase.

- *Entitlement*

Consumers believe they are entitled to the best deal and are not prepared to settle for what they perceive to be inferior value.

- *Commoditization*

There is a limited number of significant differentiating characteristics between certain products. Furthermore, consumers are often confused by the intricate, and often technical, nuances between products, instead seeing these as being relatively similar.

- *Insecurity*

Customer financial problems can induce brand switching and therefore reduce loyalty.

- *Time scarcity*

There is often inadequate time to be loyal, therefore the most convenient option is often chosen.

Schrive (1997) advocates that these six forces result in consumer defections, complaints, cynicism, reduced affiliation, greater price sensitivity, and litigiousness. Building customer relationships provides the marketer with a means of combating these potential threats.

Strauss *et al*'s (2006) contrast below (see table 3.1) articulates the finer differences between 'mass marketing' and 'relationship marketing':

**Table 3.1: Continuum of Mass Marketing to Relationship Marketing**

<b>Mass Marketing</b>	<b>Relationship Marketing</b>
Discrete transactions	Continuing transactions
Short-term emphasis	Long-term emphasis
One-way communication	Two-way communication and collaboration
Acquisition focus	Retention focus
Share of market	Share of mind
Product differentiation	Customer differentiation

**Source: Strauss *et al* (2006:360)**

However, a more sophisticated view is purported by Terblanche (2003). In his view, the work by Harker (1999) is the most comprehensive to date, listing 26 definitions of relationship marketing. The result of applying a content-analysis-based methodology to these definitions suggests that seven relationship marketing constructs enjoy general support (Terblanche, 2003). Table 3.2 on the following page contains these constructs.

**Table 3.2: Seven conceptual categories of Relationship Marketing**

Primary construct	Other common constructs
Creation	Attracting, establish, getting
Development	Enhancing, strengthening, enhance
Maintenance	Sustainable, stable, keeping
Interactive	Exchange, mutually, co-operative
Long term	Lasting, permanent, retaining
Emotional content	Commitment, trust, promises
Output	Profitable, rewarding, efficiency

**Source: Terblanche (2003:3)**

These constructs may be interpreted as follows:

- The *creation construct* refers to initiating the relationship. This entails being noticed by the target market, and the marketer subsequently judging the receptiveness to the prospect of entering into a relationship. This may involve some degree of persuasion and enticement from these quarters. Furthermore, members of the target market must be willing to dedicate the necessary time and energy to the relationship. In short, there should be sufficient commitment from both parties.
- The *development construct* refers to enhancing and nurturing the relationship, so as to strengthen it over time. Here, the proposer should stress the benefits of having mutual goals aligned in the form of a partnership.
- The *maintenance construct* refers to maintaining ongoing relations and dialogue. In this respect, ‘radio silence’ (non correspondence for a length of time) may threaten to prematurely end the relationship. The two parties should be as tightly integrated as possible to ensure that outside parties do not possess the ability to prematurely terminate the relationship.
- The *interactive construct* refers to making and delivering promises, particularly on the proposer’s behalf. This may entail making special offers, giving preference to the needs of the other party, hosting special functions to refresh the relationship, etc.

- The *long term construct* refers to planning for the future. Relationships should, preferably, be lifetime affairs. Relationship plans should be mapped out, in advance, to create space in which the relationship can grow. This ensures that the relationship does not deteriorate as time progresses and interest and enthusiasm inevitably wanes. The plan should ensure that the relationship stays invigorated and that there are always obvious incentives for both parties. Thus, the road ahead should be cleared of obstacles.
- The *emotional content construct* refers to the presence of a soul within the relationship. The relationship should ideally mimic a classic friendship – both parties should share a passion for common goals and should invest some personal capacity into it. It should be more than just a business arrangement; it should be a mutual commitment to face the future together.
- The *output construct* refers to the benefits of the relationship. This would primarily consist of the satisfaction and security accrued to each party by participating in the relationship.

By employing a relationship marketing strategy, a company therefore becomes less product-orientated and instead focuses on the quality of customer relations and customer service. It reverses the role adopted by most firms today – it looks at the means in which the company can cater for the customer's needs, not the means in which the company can take advantage of the customer (Levitt, 1960).

In some versions of the relationship marketing concept, the marketing focus is entirely on the relationship and not on the product (Grönroos, 1996). A firm may therefore find competing on the core business alone to be insufficient, thereby registering the need to compete on the total offering, of which the product itself is simply one element. All elements of the offering are then examined for their value-producing aspects, and those which do not provide consumer value are minimised or eliminated. Firms develop strategies to bring to bear those resources that maintain a continuing satisfactory relationship with the individual consumer. A strong relationship with the consumer allows the producers to shape the benefits to meet consumer need, hence increasing the net value (Dirks, 1998).

Indeed, recent conceptualizations of marketing as being the integration of a customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional co-ordination (Narver and Slater, 1990) stress the key features of a relationship marketing philosophy: using all employees of an organization to profitably



meet the lifetime needs of targeted customers in an improved manner than is currently being achieved by the competition (a view echoed by McKenna, 1991).

Exploring relationship marketing at a deeper level, Palmer (1996), building on Berry's (1995) conceptualization of three levels of relationship marketing, contends that relationship marketing can be classified into three broad approaches:

At a tactical level, relationship marketing can be used as a sales tool. Developments in technology have spawned many short term loyalty schemes (Treacy and Wiersema, 1993). However, the implementation of such schemes has often been opportunistic, leading to expensive loyalty programmes which create loyalty to the incentive rather than the supplier (Barnes, 1994). In a student recruitment context, this may manifest itself in the form of prospective students being attracted to an institution through short term incentives sought in the recruitment campaign, as opposed to more meaningful criteria and benefits. This could also lead to a prospective student's pretence to intend to join an institution, thus experiencing the benefits of social incentives (e.g. invitations to special events), or benefiting from acquiring merchandise as gifts, without any serious intention to eventually enrol at the institution.

At a more strategic level, relationship marketing has been seen as a process by which suppliers seek to 'tie-in' customers through legal, economic, technological, geographic and time bonds (Liljander and Strandvik, 1995). Although it has been contended that such bonds may, in fact, lead to customer detention rather than retention (Dick and Basu, 1994), an institution that has not developed a deep-seated relationship with its customers may be unable to sustain the relationship if the legal or technological environment changes. A relationship is therefore sometimes misconstrued as an asymmetric association based on inequalities of knowledge, power and resources, rather than mutual trust and empathy (Barnes, 1994). Where tying-in is achieved through mutually rewarding co-operation, mutual dependence and shared risk, the relationship is likely to show greater stability and endurance (Han *et al*, 1993). In a student recruitment context, this may be found in the form of a loan, bursary or scholarship to study at a specific institution, thus persuading the prospective student to choose an institution that (s)he would otherwise not have chosen.

At a more philosophical level, relationship marketing may be argued as being the heart, or core, of the marketing philosophy. Traditional definitions of marketing focus on the primacy of customer needs and, in this respect, relationship marketing as a philosophy refocuses marketing strategy away from products and toward winning over the customer with a superior overall package. It would

appear that this has yet to be fully achieved in higher education in South Africa, yet is a notion that is considered favourable by the academic institutions themselves.

### **3.4 ENHANCING RELATIONSHIP MARKETING THROUGH MODERN TECHNOLOGY**

Whilst relationship marketing theory provides the conceptual framework, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) provides the tools for the organization to achieve relational benefits. In this respect, Strauss *et al* (2006) contend that CRM evolved from the relationship marketing concept after the advent of the Internet and other related technologies (e.g. database marketing). Boon and Kurtz (2005:164) agree: “Emerging from and closely linked to relationship marketing, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is the combination of strategies and tools that drive relationship programmes, reorienting the entire organization to a concentrated focus on satisfying customers”.

A broad overview suggests that CRM elevates relationship marketing to the next level by introducing twenty-first century technology through the utilization of dynamic databases, data mining techniques and, correspondingly, advanced marketing skills. Hence, it appears that CRM provides a platform for the active management of relationships, and subsequently allows for performance measurement. Thus, Greenberg (2001:4) asserts that “technology is an enabler of the process required to turn strategy into business results”. This sentiment is further echoed by Zineldin (2000:13): “The relationship between the rate of effective Information Technology use and relationship effectiveness would be positive.”

Similarly, Bannon (2001) contends that CRM automates and centralizes customer contacts, allows the development of products and services by better understanding underlying customer behaviour, provides a way to handle customer questions and complaints, and provides direct immediate information to sales, marketing, and employees as needed to better serve the customer.

However, Galbreath and Rogers (1999:162) provide a more definitive definition of Customer Relationship Management. They express CRM as the “activities a business performs to identify, qualify, acquire, develop and retain increasingly loyal and profitable customers by delivering the right product or service, to the right customer, through the right channel, at the right time and the right cost. CRM integrates sales, marketing, service, enterprise resource planning and supply-chain management functions through business process automation, technology solutions, and information

resources to maximize each customer contact. CRM facilitates relationships among enterprises, their customers, business partners, suppliers, and employees.”

Ryals (2000) explains that value should be derived from the investment in technology. To this end, he asserts that despite the focus on the technology, the most significant part of CRM is actually the human aspect. Thus, without the correct management, significant investment in technology is likely to be wasted.

Considering the customer relationship, Blattberg and Deighton (1996) advocate that these relationships are quantifiable, and may be evaluated in terms of the expected *Life Time Value* (LTV) of the customer. The LTV is calculated by adding the incremental amounts of profit that each customer will generate for the company, due to repeat business, over their lifetime. Based on their LTV scores, customers may be ranked, relative to each other, with the more valuable customers being earmarked for preferential treatment. Positive LTV customers should be acquired and retained, whilst negative LTV customers should be discarded as quickly as possible.

It is suggested that the concept of Life Time Value is not directly applicable to public higher education student recruitment, as the educational product is, arguably, not frequently purchased by a single individual, and most institutions are more concerned about assessing academic qualifying characteristics than the monetary LTV of the customer. However, institutions may well favour candidates who are not reliant on institutional funding (i.e. able to pay some or all of their own academic fees, as there is often a limited budget for financial assistance), are likely to graduate and continue their studies as postgraduate students, or even those students likely to become loyal alumni and serve as donors in the future. These factors, inter alia, may all be alternative criteria to influence the LTV of the prospective student, rather than pure profit considerations.

Discriminating between customers is made possible by using accurate data, collected in databases and/or data warehouses. In this regard, database marketing involves “collecting, analysing, and disseminating electronic information about customers, prospects, and products [in order] to increase profits” (Strauss *et al*, 2006:32), as well as to “assist in forming long term relationships and brand loyalty” (Reedy and Schullo, 2004:295). Similarly, DeTienne and Thompson (1996:13) view database marketing as “the process of systematically collecting, in electronic format or optical format, data about past, current and/or potential customers, maintaining the integrity of the data by continually monitoring customer purchases and/or by inquiring about changing status and using the data to formulate marketing strategy and foster personalised relationships with customers”. To this

end, it appears that database marketing allows a company or organization to target specific customers – preferably through relationship orientated means – with tailored products, arguably to the benefit of both these parties.

It is reported that “marketing databases have become an integral asset to businesses, largely due to the evolution of relationship marketing and the realization that in order to be competitive, companies need to build a relationship with their customers which is based on more than just price” (Schoenbachler *et al*, 1997:5).

Cooke (1994) proposes that organizations adopt either of two approaches to database marketing. The first approach is database marketing as a strategy. In this situation the database is central to the company’s marketing activity and can fit only with a corporate strategy embracing ‘customerization’. Thus, customer service, customer-orientated quality, and customer focus are elements of a business strategy with the database at its core. Increasingly, companies are embracing this customer-focused approach and many observers see it as an inevitable result of technological advances and consumer sophistication (Cooke, 1994).

The alternative approach is to view the database as a tactical tool. This does not necessarily mean that database marketing is interpreted as less important. Here, it is thought that marketers too often ignore tactical and practical considerations when developing strategies (Cooke, 1994). The database as a tactical tool allows the isolation of customer groups, analysis of their profiles, and close targeting of corresponding promotions. This is the most common approach, since a company can create the database and use it as a sales tool. Organizational structure and strategic orientation do not need much consideration. The promotional activity merely follows traditional production-oriented business strategies, albeit in a more targeted and cost-effective manner (Cooke, 1994).

It is suggested, although unproven as yet, that database marketing in a higher education context is presently, at best, used as a tactical tool. This is primarily due to the seemingly ad-hoc usage of database marketing, and the relatively weak linkages between many internal departments. In order to increase institutional effectiveness, it may be advisable for institutions to switch to the use of database marketing as a strategy.

Once the necessary data has been collected, data mining becomes possible. According to O’Connor *et al* (2004:125) data mining constitutes the “process of extracting hidden or previously unknown, comprehensible and actionable information from large databases”. Although there appears to be no agreed classification scheme for data mining techniques, “tasks solved by data

mining include predicting, classifying, detecting relationships, and market basket analysis” (Strauss *et al.*, 2006:166). Fortunately, many companies have recognized data mining as an important technique that will have an impact on the performance of their business (Lee and Siau, 2001).

Owing to the fact that data mining is useful in identifying hidden patterns, or trends, that exist in customer records, this technique may be used to shed some insight on consumer behaviour. For example, in a higher education context, an institution may find that demand for certain degrees (e.g. accounting) fluctuates with conditions in the employment market, whilst demand for other degrees (e.g. English literature) stays relatively constant over time. Furthermore, the institution may find, for example, that the instability of the fluctuations in demand may actually come from scholars in only a few geographic regions.

In summation, Rigby and Ledingham (2004:129) argue that “by setting priorities for their information requirements carefully, making sure they’re guided by overall customer strategy, companies can launch highly disciplined CRM efforts that will have a greater impact with lower investment and risk. CRM, in other words, is coming to resemble any other valuable management tool. [...] No longer a black hole, CRM is becoming a basic building block of corporate success.”

### **3.5 SHORT-COMINGS OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

Relationship marketing and CRM has not, however, simply been adopted without question as the pinnacle of the marketing discipline. In fact, critics have argued that such an approach may only be suitable in a select number of scenarios and that the costs can often outweigh the benefits. This was highlighted by Fournier *et al* (1998:50) with the surprise conclusion that “relationship marketing as it is currently practiced has not brought us closer to customers. It has sent us farther afield”. This is due to a number of misconceptions about the nature of relationship marketing. Some of these factors are summarized below.

Firstly, in terms of relationship desire, not all customers aspire toward a relationship with an organization (Newell, 2003; Verhoef and Langerak, 2002). In fact, some consumers are more likely than others to form relationships, which are of varying types and intensity depending upon the service context (Barnes, 1994). This was further substantiated in research by Reinartz and Kumar (2002) wherein they concluded that loyalty did not constitute a strong indicator that customers would market the company. Instead, they found attitude to be considerably more important.

Secondly, the nature of the relationship may be misunderstood. It is argued that parties to an exchange may have no expectation of ongoing relationships (Palmer, 1996). One of the defining characteristics of relational exchange, identified by Macneil (1980), is a time orientation within which exchange occurs. However, it may be naïve to assume that time is a continuous construct in which a longer time orientation implies a greater relational orientation (Palmer, 1996). A second argument against time orientation being synonymous with relational exchange is the observation that frequency of transactions between a buyer and seller does not necessarily imply any long term loyalty from one to the other (O'Brien and Jones, 1995).

Thirdly, relationship marketing can serve to increase costs, as well as revenues (Newell, 2003). For firms, the most rewarding relationships with customers result from continued investment to create effective loyalty, rather than financially based incentives (Barnes, 1994; Kanter, 1994). The excessive use of financial incentives to create loyalty may place a firm at a cost disadvantage in a market where cost leadership is important (Porter, 1998), while securing little underlying loyalty. While pioneers in a sector may introduce schemes and gain additional profitable business from competitors, incentives for loyalty can rapidly become a sector norm which customers expect in the future (Palmer, 1996).

Despite Reichfeld and Sasser's (1990) protestations that satisfied customers are less price sensitive and more inclined to spend a greater amount on tried-and-trusted products, Reinartz and Kumar (2002) provided results suggesting that loyal customers do not always cost less to serve and that loyal customers are often not prepared to pay more for the same product or service. In fact, in many instances, loyal customers were found to be more price sensitive than intransigent customers. To this end, Verhoef and Langerak (2002) agree. They contend that long-lasting relationships have not been proved to be more profitable than dealings with intransigent customers.

Fourthly, external opportunities may be overlooked due to the closeness of the parties. In this respect, a non-consensual relationship where one superior party is able to exercise authority over a subordinate party may be classified as qualitatively inferior to a relationship based on bilateral governance mechanisms (Heide, 1994). One specific outcome of symmetric dependence is that parties will have a joint motivation to show forbearance (Buckley and Casson, 1988) or flexibility in response to changing circumstances. In the absence of symmetrical dependence, an individual party will have little incentive to show flexibility, because no guarantee exists that such actions will be reciprocated.

These concerns highlight the fact that a relationship marketing strategy is not necessarily a solution for all companies and organizations. In essence, there are almost certainly instances in which a relationship marketing approach may hamper success by increasing costs and creating unnecessary and counterproductive barriers to the adoption of more favourable alternatives. Whilst these are acknowledged to be possible concerns in the context of higher education student recruitment, the empirical research is likely to ascertain the relevance of such assertions.

### **3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed the various nuances of relationship marketing in higher education. It was contended that ‘non-profit’ organizations, notwithstanding higher education institutions, face similar competitive forces that make relationship marketing an attractive strategy for many ‘for-profit’ firms. Specifically, it was argued that relationship marketing is concerned with attracting, maintaining and building customer relationships, and is regarded by many academic scholars as the paradigm shift of the twenty-first century.

Customer Relationship Management, a combination of relationship marketing amalgamated with modern *Information and Communications Technology*, was introduced and its technological facilitators (e.g. database marketing, data mining, etc.) discussed.

However, relationship marketing was also considered to be an imperfect solution for a host of reasons. These reasons include the fact that some customers deliberately avoid relationships, relationships are subjective in nature and may relatively easily be misunderstood, relationships may not necessarily be cost effective, and that relationships may even be counterproductive if future possibilities (beyond the realm of the relationship) are merely discarded without due consideration.

The following chapter considers additional means which lend themselves to the advancement of the student recruitment function. In the context of this study, *brand management*, *youth marketing*, and *Information and Communications Technology* are identified as three prominent themes in the literature. Each is considered in terms of potential positive impact on the recruitment programme.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **EXPLORING THE STUDENT RECRUITMENT DOMAIN**



## **4.1 INTRODUCTION TO EXPLORING THE STUDENT RECRUITMENT DOMAIN**

A number of prominent themes emerged in the literature with respect to the possible optimization of the student recruitment function. These issues were subsequently explored, and the importance of which confirmed, in the series of experience interviews conducted. In the context of this dissertation, three such themes have been reviewed: *brand management* (as suggested by Bulotaite, 2003; Moogan and Baron, 2003; Rolfe, 2003; etc.), *youth marketing* (as suggested by Goldgehn, 2004; Stump, 2003; Terhanian and Geraci, 2004; etc.) and *Information and Communications Technology* (as suggested by Adams *et al*, 2002; Gomes and Murphy, 2003; Schindler-Ender, 2001; etc.)

This chapter of the dissertation has therefore been dedicated, and segmented according, to exploring the relevant theoretical underpinning and examining the manner in which each component can add benefit to enhancing a relationship orientated approach to student recruitment.

## **4.2 THE FIRST THEME: BRAND MANAGEMENT**

It would appear that marketers often suffer from the delusion that customers or potential customers actually want to be in a relationship with the organization. In fact, not all customers desire a relationship with an organization, with some individuals more likely than others to form relationships (Barnes, 1994). Deborah Wiltrout of the Admissions Marketing Department at the University of Maryland notes that building a strong institutional brand is, in fact, key to enticing customers into a relationship (Pulley, 2003). This theory is further underscored by De Chernatony and McDonald (2003), who claim that a brand is an imperative relationship lubricant. If customers can be enticed to become passionate about the brand, and if they want to actively be associated with it, they are more inclined to enter into a relationship with the organization. Hence, ideally, the brand should act as a magnet – supplementing relationship marketing efforts and drawing all constituents closer together.

The strategic importance of brand management within the student recruitment function was highlighted by Cosser (2002) in a recent Human Sciences Research Council study, wherein he found the reputation of the institution and/or programme of study to be the most important assessment criterion when a scholar is choosing a place of study. Furthermore, several other authors (e.g. Bulotaite, 2003; Moogan and Baron, 2003; Rolfe, 2003; etc.) have strongly associated the

function of brand management with that of student recruitment. If indeed student recruitment is to be optimized through a relationship focus (as advocated by Tapp *et al.*, 2004; Yuille, n.d.), brand management will certainly require investigation.

#### **4.2.1 AN OVERVIEW OF BRAND MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The American Marketing Association describes a brand as “a name, term, symbol or design or a combination of these items intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate them from those of the competition” (Keller, 2003:3). “Brands embody dimensions such as the logo, design, smell, shape, sound, colour and communication – these factors all differentiate the brand, although some are often more prominent than others” (Van der Walt, 1995:130).

Achenbaum (1993) differentiates between a product and a brand. In his words, “what distinguishes a brand from its unbranded commodity counterpart and gives it equity is the sum total of consumers’ perceptions and feelings about the products’ attributes and how they perform, about the brand name and what it stands for, and about the company associated with the brand”. This is similarly viewed by Siguaw (1999:49) who proposes the view that a brand gives the consumer something to relate to that is vivid, alive, and more complete than what is conveyed by the general offering. In this sense, “a well-established brand personality can result in increased preference and usage, higher emotional ties to the brand, and trust and loyalty”.

Keller (2003:9) advocates that consumers benefit from brands in a number of noteworthy manners, namely:

- Brands identify the source of the product
- Brands represent an assignment of responsibility to the producer/manufacturer
- Brands reduce risk
- Brands reduce search costs
- Brands contain a promise, bond or pact with the maker of the product
- Brands are a signal of quality

In particular, higher education brands may be used to send a strong signal to potential students about the quality and credibility of the institution (Thomson, 2002). Potential students may then use these cues to assess the attractiveness of a number of institutions (Utleay, 2002). To this end, it is

likely that strong higher education brands hold a significant amount of appeal to senior high school scholars, who may aspire to be associated with these brands in the near future.

On the other hand, Keller (2003:9) also advocates that producers/manufacturers benefit from brands in a variety of noteworthy manners, namely:

- Brands are a means of identifying products in the marketplace, and easing their passage through the supply channel
- Brands are a means of legally protecting unique features
- Brands are a signal of quality level to satisfied customers
- Brands are a means of endowing products with unique association
- Brands are a source of competitive advantage
- Brands are a source of financial returns

Relating such a framework to the higher education sector, brands appear to be a means of labeling the quality of graduates (in effect, a seal of approval), establishing pulling power in recruiting students, endorsing the legitimacy of research products, and legally protecting advertising features (e.g. the use of a mountainous backdrop set against the main hall on campus, as used in one institution's brand imagery).

The remainder of this section is dedicated to researching the benefits of building a strong institutional brand, the manner in which this practice can mitigate perceived risk, as well as the challenges and dangers inherent in brand management.

#### **4.2.2 BRANDING DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Higher education institutions appear to be extremely concerned about their standing and image in the marketplace. To this end, their 'name' or reputation often underpins their existence. Recently, administrators at educational institutions are becoming challenged to view the development and execution of marketing and advertising programs as a means of building an institution into a brand, as well as to recognize the implications of branding for the recruitment process (Cook and Fennell, 2001; Rosen *et al*, 1998a; Rosen *et al*, 1998b; Sevier, 2002). This necessitates an overview and analysis of the practices in higher education branding.

McNally and Speak (2002:4) define a higher education brand as “perception or emotion maintained by a buyer or a prospective buyer describing the experience related to doing business with an academic institution with its product and service”.

Renelle Shampeny, Director of Marketing, SUNY Empire State College, adds that “if the institution has an awareness problem, either being misunderstood or unfamiliar in the marketplace, a good brand will capture the imagination, illustrating its mission with eye-catching visuals and an unforgettable tagline or slogan”. She contends that “the brand should be reflected through publications, ads, billboards, web sites, logo, colour palette, etc. to unify the programs and integrate the communications”. Furthermore, she proposes that a good brand should not only resonate with external audiences (thereby burnishing the institution’s image), but should also speak to internal audiences (i.e. faculty, staff, students, donors, etc.) and instil pride in the institution (Shampeny, 2003:1).

In marketing terms, the institutional name equates to the brand, and the goal becomes to optimize brand equity. In this respect, Fombrun (1996) introduces the notion of ‘reputational capital’, which he defines as a form of intangible wealth that is closely related to the concepts of goodwill (accounting terms) or brand equity (marketing terms). Fombrun (1996) asserts that an institution stands at a competitive advantage against its rivals if it has a relatively large amount of ‘reputational capital’.

Sevier (2001) considers branding in higher education in terms of brand image and brand loyalty. In this respect, brand image describes the desire of students, donors, and others to use brands as signs of status and success. He cites the example of students placing stickers on their cars to advertise the fact that they are proud to be associated with their specific institution. Brand loyalty, on the other hand, indicates a preference for familiar brands and a distinct favouritism toward certain institutional brands. Here, he cites evidence which may be found at sporting events where students are most likely to cheer for their institution’s side, even if they are unfamiliar with the team and/or the sport being played.

Thus, it would appear that brand image entails a uni-directional orientation whereby a student obtains benefits with little, or no, direct contributive effort. However, brand loyalty appears to be more actionable and closer to bi-directional in nature. The latter may therefore be argued to tend toward a relationship of sorts.

### 4.2.3 PERCEIVED RISK IN HIGHER EDUCATION BRAND MANAGEMENT

In higher education, prominent institutions appear to be understandably proud of their brands and leverage these in the marketplace to attract financial and intellectual capital. In a nutshell, it seems that these brands are promoted by institutions in the expectation that they will provide a level of certainty to reduce risk for buyers of the educational offerings (i.e. the students themselves).

Stone and Gronhaug (1993) advocate that consumers are receptive to brands due to the fact that they reduce perceived risk. This may manifest itself in six forms: *functional risk*, *physical risk*, *financial risk*, *social risk*, *psychological risk*, and *time risk*.

The risks, as stated in the above framework, may be applied to student recruitment as follows:

The *functional risk* may be interpreted as whether the quality of the services of the institution meets the expectation of the student. Essentially, this concerns the issue of standards and hence the credibility of the educational service. The student may therefore ask him/herself, “are the academic and administrative standards higher or lower than that anticipated prior to registration?” This question may only be answered after the student has enrolled at the institution and attended classes for a reasonable period of time. However, in the case of academic standards, comprehensive answers may only be made available when the individual begins his/her search for employment.

In a study by Warwick and Mansfield (2003), several authors (Admissions Marketing Group, 1985; Krukowski, 1985; Sekely and Yates, 1991; Shank and Beasley, 1998; Widdows and Hilton, 1990) found the quality of academic staff, quality of majors of interest, and overall academic reputation as being the most important factors when prospective students and their parents engage in the process of assessing functional risk.

The *physical risk* may be expressed as the level of safety on campus. For example, is the campus well protected by security forces? Are the lives of students endangered by those individuals who may wish to disrupt academic proceedings and cause instability on campus? This still appears to be a prominent issue in South Africa, even ten years after the advent of democracy, with disruptions at tertiary education institutions occurring country-wide (News24.com, 2005; News24.com, 2004a; News24.com, 2004b; News24.com, 2003c; News24.com, 2003d).

According to Warwick and Mansfield (2003), Broekemier and Seshadri (1999) suggest that elements of the institution such as size, location and even weather are significant in terms of physical risk.

The *financial risk* entails whether the student, accommodation and/or club/society fees are deemed to be worth the fees charged. In South Africa, each institution sets its own fees – these are not directly prescribed by the national government. Due to the fact that tertiary education in South Africa is generally considered to be expensive, it is essential that the prospective student perceives the fees to be ‘value for money’ or else ensures that these are discounted by bursaries, scholarships, etc. so that their financial input is deemed acceptable. Some students may also be forced into applying for, and accepting, a student loan. Here, the interest of the loan needs to be settled on a monthly basis whilst the student is still studying, and the capital repayment of which begins immediately after the student has graduated. This places a greater burden on these individuals and heightens the importance of the perceived financial risk.

According to Warwick and Mansfield (2003), Chapman (1993) and Shank and Beasley (1998) found cost to be one of the most important factors in the college selection process. Similarly, Freeman (1984) found that financial aid also influenced this process, with the exception of high income (i.e. low to no need) students.

Furthermore, Krukowski (1985) advocates that parents may be willing to pay high fees in return for better career opportunities for their children upon graduation, and Koshal and Koshal (1994) deem a religious environment (needed in order to fulfill beliefs) as worthy of a fees premium.

The *social risk* entails choosing the right institution or the right type of institution. For instance, it may be socially undesirable for exceptionally intellectual individuals to study at a University of Technology, as opposed to a traditional University. This may cause embarrassment with reference to peers and family members, and may be ill advisable for this reason. Owing to the fact that many institutions in South Africa are still classified by some as ‘previously black’ or ‘previously white’, it may even be a social taboo for certain students to cross this unofficial ethnic divide.

According to Warwick and Mansfield (2003), Clark and Crawford (1992) propose two concepts – academic integration and social integration. The former relates to the degree to which the student achieves academic success, whereas the latter refers to the student’s personal and social success. They maintain that both types of integration are important for the student, since the greater the

compatibility between the student and institution, the higher the probability that the student will complete the academic programme.

The *psychological risk* may mean moving away from friends to study in a different city, or may even be interpreted as choosing a particularly demanding degree, which may prove to be too mentally challenging for the student.

According to Warwick and Mansfield (2003), other authors such as Conard and Conard (2000) and Murphy (1981) advocate that an institution's reputation is, arguably, the most prominent influence in terms of minimizing psychological risk. However, Conard and Conard's argument appears to lack the required depth and consideration of actual psychological risk factors. Instead, it is proposed that reputation is most important in mitigating functional risk.

The *time risk* may be expressed as the student being unable to easily transfer between institutions if the chosen option is found to be undesirable. This is due to the fact that the tuition periods of institutions largely coincide with each other. In this respect, time risk may also be considered as an opportunity cost. Thus, instead of studying, the student could alternatively be employed in a full-time position earning a regular income. Thus, a student's lifestyle and life stage are also likely to have an influence on the concept of time risk.

#### **4.2.4 CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION BRAND MANAGEMENT**

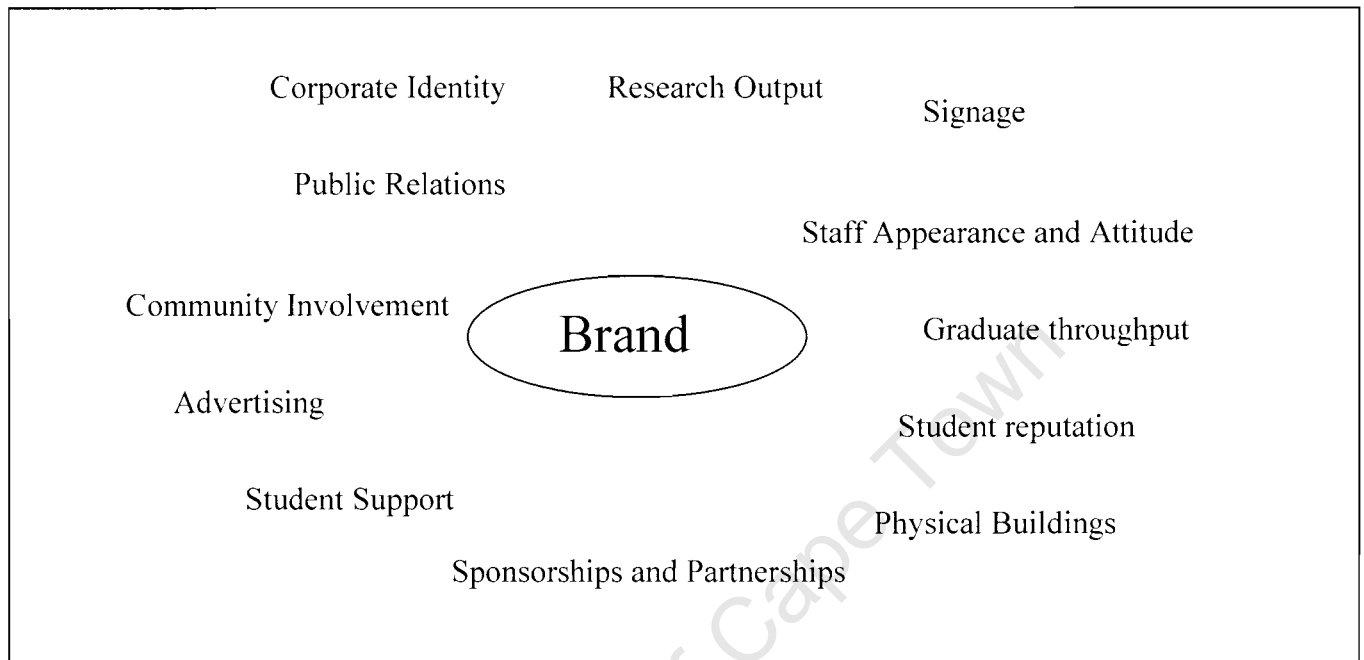
Unifying and accentuating the brand is often a challenge, as due to its multifaceted nature it is inherently difficult to manage. According to Wileman and Jary (1997), this is considered to be the 'multiplicity effect' and creates an instability which requires ongoing attention.

De Chernatony and McDonald (2003) acknowledge the challenge of services branding and the notion that the principles of goods branding do not necessarily apply equally to services branding. In essence, they contend that this is too simplistic an approach.

In terms of higher education, "student life is a web of interconnected experiences which overlap and influence student satisfaction" (Elliott and Healy, 2001:2). Sevier (1996), similarly, contends that an institution's product is the sum of the student's academic, social, physical, and even spiritual experiences. However, this inevitably makes the educational offering somewhat difficult to brand.

Kotecha (2003:4) proposes that branding is made more complex by the fact that it is difficult to determine what exactly the higher education institution sells. “Does it sell graduates, research or something else?” Figure 4.1, depicted below, illustrates Kotecha’s view on the influences various people, products and impressions have on the institutional brand.

**Figure 4.1: The multifaceted nature of the institutional brand**



**Source: Kotecha (2003:3)**

It is immediately evident, upon consulting figure 4.1, that the institutional brand is indeed extremely multifaceted and, for this reason, may prove difficult to manage. Those elements affecting the brand include corporate identity, public relations, community involvement, advertising, student support, sponsors and partnerships, research output, signage, staff appearance and attitude, graduate throughput, student reputation and physical buildings.

Thus, it may be argued that when considering a traditional University or University of Technology in South Africa, the following factors, inter alia, have a direct affect on the brand:

- the behaviour of thousands of students and staff members
- the research output by hundreds of academics, scattered over a large range of different disciplines
- the state of the buildings and facilities on campus, as well as the signage thereof (usually controlled by maintenance departments, and therefore not marketing departments)



- the advertising efforts of different sections of the institution. as well as the institution as a whole (this is often varied across different academic departments with their own web sites, independent public relations exercises, etc.)
- events and exhibitions staged by different departments (these may include conferences, student competitions, community outreach programmes, etc.)
- student service levels and facilities in different faculties (these often vary significantly according to faculty size and corresponding budgetary constraints)
- graduate throughput may also be influenced by factors such as the interest from prospective students in certain areas of study, the ability of students to pay their fees timeously, the institution's equity and skills development policies. etc.

Cetin (2003) proposes a list of positive image determinants which build the institutional brand, and negative image determinants which detract from the institutional brand. These were developed for use within the Turkish academic sector, but the vast majority of which appear to be universally applicable. This list is depicted in table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Positive and negative brand determinants**

#### **POSITIVE IMAGE DETERMINANTS**

- Students and their conduct
- Faculty
- Administration
- Graduates
- University and industry relations
- Satisfaction of internal and external stakeholders
- Mediatric rector / Leader
- Rules on the campus
- Difference in education and curriculum
- Alumni associations
- Membership to national and international associations
- National and international exchange programs
- Joint ventures and projects
- Research and publications
- Significant building, physical and social facilities
- History of the University

#### **NEGATIVE IMAGE DETERMINANTS**

- Bureaucracy and centralization in educational institutions
- Some education policies and rules governed by the HEC
- Higher education policy in Turkey regarding public and foundation Universities
- Tuition fee policy for public and foundation Universities
- Being newly founded
- Economical issues
- Budget policy
- Media attacks on foundation Universities and its ancillary services and entities
- Unsatisfied internal and external stakeholders
- Deficient resources and facilities
- Quality degradation
- Decrease in research and publications
- Restriction in administrators mobility and planning
- Uncertainty

**Source: Cetin (2003:68)**

However, whilst this list certainly provides a large number of attributes affecting the brand, the distinction between positive and negative brand determinants appears to be very much specific to the institution. For example, if one considers ‘students and their conduct’, one institution might have a reputation for attracting diligent students, whilst another may have a reputation for attracting less conscientious students. A further example may be ‘rules of campus’ – whilst one institution may be respected for the level of discipline instilled in, and practiced by, its students, another institution may be perceived as being too stringent (i.e. not allowing its students the necessary freedom of expression) and thus allowing its rules to add toward its detriment. It is therefore almost impossible to determine, in general terms, into which category an attribute is likely to fall. Nonetheless, Cetin does put forward a comprehensive set of factors that influence the institutional brand.

Another challenge faced by brand marketers in higher education is that pertaining to commercial advertising. To this end, advertising may, in fact, be potentially dangerous when the institution is already well established and respected in the market. Although advertising is generally perceived to be a brand building activity (De Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; Keller, 2003), it may be seen to be counterproductive in the realm of higher education. In this respect, there appears to be considerable scepticism concerning what strong brands have to gain by advertising themselves. This is seen as self-defeating in many circles. The question is then often posed, particularly by academics within the institution itself, “why is it that we *need* to advertise?” Pulley (2003:31) identifies much resistance within the institutions themselves: “There is a lot of natural resistance, particularly from the faculty who don’t want to become too business-focused at the expense of things that make a university unique. There continues to be a debate about how commercial we should be.”

In summation, it appears that brand management has a role to play in relationship construction and development in the student recruitment context. The next section addresses the second theme (i.e. youth marketing) and the positive influences it is likely to have in the same context.

### **4.3 THE SECOND THEME: YOUTH MARKETING**

Practitioners of youth marketing recognize that generations don’t think, speak and behave in the same manner. Youth marketing therefore researches the inner thoughts of young consumers and attempts to determine what shapes their world, what is currently topical and what will appeal to them in the future (Cohen, 2001). In this respect, Donnell (2002:17) reports that “researching their [young individuals’] lifestyles, attitudes and preferences on a continual basis is not only vital, but a

marketing buck well spent. It will increase your knowledge base, and allow the market to feel that its voice is being heard – a crucial factor in a market that likes to co-create brand meaning.”

In a relationship marketing context, it may be argued that the underlying construct is one of partnership. Youth marketing therefore appears to be a prominent theme for an institution to pursue if it hopes to facilitate a deep, meaningful relationship with individuals in the identified target market. The remainder of this section examines research conducted both locally and abroad in order to discover how effective and constructive relationships, based on an understanding of youth culture, may be fostered between an institution and prospective students. Thus, in the context of this dissertation, youth marketing is explored as the second theme to assist in the formation a relationship orientation to student recruitment strategy.

Furthermore, several authors (e.g. Goldgehn, 2004; Stump, 2003; Terhanian and Geraci, 2004; etc.) have associated the function of youth marketing with that of student recruitment. If indeed student recruitment is to be optimized through a relationship focus (as advocated by Tapp *et al*, 2004; Yuille, n.d.), youth marketing will certainly require investigation.

#### **4.3.1 KEY INSIGHTS INTO YOUTH MARKETING**

There are a number of prominent issues which have been identified within the literature.

Firstly, it is vital that marketers keep pace with change, and adapt and grow their brand with the consumer. Crucially, the communication and marketing of an applicable brand should reflect the youth culture and lifestyle of the consumers it hopes to target, or else it will be immediately identified as a pretender and shunned by the market. In this respect, open, honest and original messages seem to work best, as it appears that this market is saturated with advertising, and the truth seems to be the best breakthrough mechanism (Donnell, 2002). Hence, this market seems to crave “legitimacy, authenticity [...] The real thing.” (Du Plessis, 2003:21) and marketers would be foolhardy to ignore such a powerful message.

Secondly, the teenage segment of the youth market brings vastly different dynamics into the marketing mix, as issues such as peer group pressure and the need for acceptance start to affect purchasing decisions. As Craig Sims, Atoll Media publisher, aptly claims: “It’s the peer groups who decide what’s hot and what’s not, and it all filters down from there.” (Donnell, 2002:18).

However, this is not a universally accepted view. There is a raging debate in the literature concerning whether youth marketers should appeal to the trendsetting subset of the market in the hope that the remainder of the market will follow suit or, alternatively, whether to target the majority of the market even if the message is perceived as unoriginal, thereby losing any exclusivity appeal.

The pyramid theory holds that “trends are set at the top of the demographic pyramid, and through peer pressure, they filter down” (Du Plessis, 2003:19). This view is supported by Sims, who claims that “there is no point in talking to 200 000 dorks when you can talk to 20 000 trendsetters. The dorks are at the bottom of the pyramid, nothing filters up, it’s a filter-down effect”. Sims argues that this approach “could save your brand from a future destined for dork-dom” (Du Plessis, 2003:19).

Nonetheless, this view is disputed by Bateleur research director, Gordon Hooper. Hooper disagrees with Sims, firmly stating that “appealing to the youth market is about appealing to the masses. [...] The masses are the ‘dorks’, and it doesn’t take genius to realise that the money lies in the masses.” (Du Plessis, 2003:21). Despite this, Sims argues vehemently that there is indeed an inverse relationship between the mainstream acceptance of a phenomena and the perceived ‘coolness’ of it.

Thirdly, an aptitude for interactive media has meant that instant messaging technology (most prominently, SMS technology) has been successfully applied to a large number of youth marketing campaigns across the board. “The innovations around SMS marketing, polling and competition entries have ignited a fire in the inquisitive nature of our youth, providing marketers with a real database and a real platform from which to begin or end campaigns.” (Du Plessis, 2003:21).

Fourthly, a “brand personality that exudes a carefree, sociable, outgoing, physical, energetic, and outdoor attitude is actually far more likely to attract the eye of a teen or ‘young adult’ (16-24 years)” (Du Plessis, 2003:21). In this respect, Hooper warns that subtlety is the key. “A brand that is too obviously trying to look cool, be cool, or say cool things is, strangely enough, immediately labelled uncool.” (Du Plessis, 2003:21).

An interesting notion is advocated by Lopiano-Misdorn and De Luca (1998). They found that in the youth market, marketers should avoid the trying-to-be-cool approach and rather switch to reverse marketing, making their brands underdogs and lacking confidence. This was executed in the Sprite soft drinks campaign, with the tagline ‘Image is nothing, thirst is everything...’

However, Lopiano-Misdorn and De Luca's advice may have unintended consequences in the higher education sector where a strong, respected, and confident brand is thought to be of critical importance. Their view may, though, serve as a word of warning to marketers that arrogance is a potential brand wrecker.

The contrasting views expressed above are indictment of the dynamic and subjective nature of the youth market. It would appear that there is widespread agreement that the youth market is a powerful, yet under researched one. However, the specifics of this market seem to be highly debatable and very much open to interpretation.

#### **4.3.2 INSIGHTS INTO SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH MARKETING THROUGH THE TREND YOUTH I AND II STUDIES**

Two recent studies, Trend Youth I (UISM, 2002) and Trend Youth II (UISM, 2003b) shed some valuable insights into the mindsets of young South Africans and the marketing practices in place to encourage them to spend their money. The former study considers youth in the age bracket of eighteen to twenty-four, whilst the latter study includes youth in the age bracket seven to seventeen. It may be contended that the target market of the student recruitment marketer surrounds the intersection of the age brackets of these two studies. For this reason, both studies have been consulted and considered in the context of this dissertation.

Consulting the findings of the Trend Youth I (UISM, 2002) study, one of the trends highlighted in the research is that children are growing up faster, a phenomenon dubbed 'kids getting older younger'. This sentiment is echoed by Donnell (2002:18): "Up-aging is very much the norm in this respect, as young teens emulate and look up to their older peers, often mimicking their choices of lifestyle, brands, and media". This means that these individuals are starting to plan ahead and are thinking about their careers, lifestyles, families, etc. at an earlier age than previous generations. This proactive stance is particularly interesting to youth marketers as they can now address young individuals about serious issues sooner. Furthermore, this increased maturity at a relatively early age appears to suggest that young people are assuming a significant degree of responsibility for themselves and are therefore relying less on their elders for guidance and support. Thus, the implication appears to be that communicating directly with the youth, as opposed to utilizing elders as infomediaries, is a potentially wise approach for marketers to adopt.

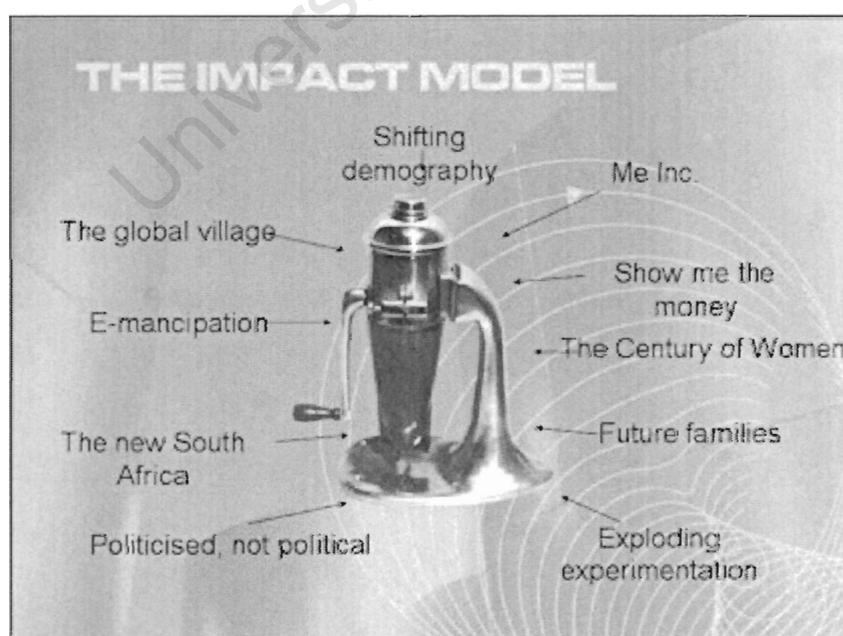
Geraci *et al* (2000) agree with the sentiment expressed above. They believe that young individuals may in fact be counted on to behave more rationally than their older counterparts. This, it is

claimed, is primarily due to the fact that these individuals are often required to justify the reasons for their decisions to their parents and peers.

This phenomenon could prove to be a new window of opportunity for higher education marketers as the youth appear to be becoming more receptive to planning their own future. To this end, this cohort should therefore be more responsive to an institution's direct marketing efforts. It may thus be possible to bypass parents who previously may have acted as "information gatekeepers" (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004:355) and therefore, in part, would have played a key role in determining the "evoked set" (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004:559) – i.e. the refined batch of acceptable options – of institutions at which their children could study. This means that if a scholar's parents have a strong preference where their child should study, an opportunity now exists to bypass this impediment and persuade the scholar that they may in fact be happier elsewhere. Nothing should be deemed a foregone conclusion in this respect. Alternatively stated, the idea of direct marketing in this context returns the power of choice to the scholar – something that appears to be most desirable in the youth market.

The 'impact' or 'blender' model (UISM, 2002) is an attempt to describe the forces shaping the environment in which the youth exist. It provides a useful framework with which to analyze this market segment. The model is depicted in figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.2: The Blender/Impact Model**



**Source: Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing (2002)**

The model points to a generation of youth who are increasingly demanding, empowered by technology, and show a strong desire for money and status as facilitators of the ‘good life’.

The Trend Youth I (UISM, 2002) report concludes that “the new generation of young adults in South Africa changes faster than any previous generation. hence it is essential to keep abreast of their shifting attitudes and behaviour” (Schutz, 2004:21). Sturman (2005), through independent research, shares this view and contends that an ever-changing mindset makes the landscape of the youth market an explosion one in which to navigate.

The Trend Youth I (UISM, 2002) report, and the blender/impact model specifically, point to a more competitive future in student recruitment where effective communication with, and a deep understanding of, the target market are key factors for success.

The Trend Youth II study (UISM, 2003b) sheds further insights into the South African youth market by researching those individuals in the seven to seventeen age bracket. Owing to the fact that student recruitment marketers are most interested in individuals in the sixteen to seventeen age bracket (classified within the Trend Youth II study as the ‘age of differentiation’), this discussion is focused on that subset of the research.

The Trend Youth II research report (UISM, 2003b) considers ‘age of differentiation’ individuals in terms of the ‘*end of childhood*’, ‘*new media mindsets*’, ‘*fame*’ and ‘*maximum respect*’.

The ‘end of childhood’ signifies the final stage of childhood and the entrance into adulthood. Here, the young adult relies less on what (s)he is told by his/her ‘superiors’ and more on his/her own findings and experiences. In a higher education context, the implication may be that young adults are becoming less reliant on their parents to choose a course and place of study for them.

The ‘end of childhood’ concept is closely linked to the concept of ‘maximum respect’. The latter entails communicating with the young individual as a ‘peer’, as opposed to as a ‘child’. In a higher education context, this may entail the institution having respect for the scholar in terms of willingness to engage with him/her directly.

The concept of ‘new media mindsets’ reiterates that technology holds little fear for this generation and that the power of interactive communication channels is most appealing. This view is supplemented by Donnell (2002), wherein it is claimed that students are particularly sensitive

regarding media, being easily irritated by flyers and radio ads and preferring instead to be targeted by television and the Internet.

This orientation should be heeded in the context of higher education – institutions would do well to interface with prospective students using the media of their choice. This media, often bi-directional, could serve as a communications bridge in a relationship driven student recruitment campaign. It would appear that interactive media such as web sites, SMS, etc. may be a crucial component of successful youth-orientated communication systems.

The concept of ‘fame’ suggests that brands need to go the extra mile to stand out in the clutter and achieve an identity worth aspiring toward. In this respect, the institutional brand may need an extra dimension to distinguish itself from competing brands. In order to achieve this, some institutions have chosen to promote the association between themselves and certain graduates who have achieved greatness or ‘fame’. This links with the idea of celebrity endorsement used in many advertisements. However, a more frequently utilized means of expressing this is for institutions to punt the intellectual talent in their arsenal (for example, the number of A-rated scientists). It should also be stressed that this finding underscores the earlier argument that an institutional brand should be considered special if it is to actively compete in a demanding marketplace.

The above findings point to a generation of young individuals who are more in control and more demanding than those youths of previous years. Thus, marketers in both the corporate and academic sectors need to respond to this through means that communicate with this generation as individuals, using maximum respect, sensitivity and sophistication, on more advanced communication platforms.

Finally, Geraci *et al* (2000) add further credence by offering the advice that marketers consider ‘tried-and-true’ advertising positionings, avoid applying subset truths to the entire market, treat the youth market with the respect they deserve, be humorous in their communications, create a strong element of brand linkage in advertisements, and conduct thorough marketing research. This appears to underscore the contributions of the other authors.

The next section, discussing *Information and Communications Technology* (ICT), builds on this discussion by suggesting the manner in which an electronic orientation may facilitate effective youth marketing communications, as well as assisting in the youth marketing research process



through enhanced data collection. Thus, ICT will be reviewed as the third theme in the goal toward developing a quintessential relationship orientated student recruitment programme.

## **4.4 THE THIRD THEME: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

*Information and Communications Technology* (ICT) is widely regarded as being paramount in the modern economy to initiate, maintain and develop relations. It also thought to be essential in reducing the communication and human management costs involved in this process.

To this end, this section analyses the viability of cellular and Internet communication platforms as a means for institutions to eliminate unnecessary communications expenditure in student recruitment activities, as well as proposing a means to satisfy the technological demand of the target market.

A general overview of the deployment of *Information and Communications Technology* in higher education is firstly reviewed, followed by a discussion of web-based marketing strategies, and the usage of other electronic messaging tools. Finally, the penetration levels of cellular and Internet technologies in the South African marketplace are discussed so as to ascertain the feasibility of deploying these communication technologies within the field of student recruitment.

Several authors (e.g. Adams *et al*, 2002; Gomes and Murphy, 2003; Schindler-Ender, 2001; etc.) have strongly associated the function of *Information and Communications Technology* with that of student recruitment. If indeed student recruitment is to be optimized through a relationship focus (as advocated by Tapp *et al*, 2004; Yuille, n.d.), this function will certainly require investigation.

### **4.4.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE DEPLOYMENT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

“In the midst of [some of the most] rapid technological changes ever seen in the history of marketing, it remains advantageous for even the most sophisticated interactive organizations to accomplish two time-tested goals of successful direct marketing, namely, quality service and quick fulfilment. This is no less true for colleges and universities who increasingly rely on their web sites to create demand for enrolment information about their institutions, and who depend on their direct marketing systems to meet this demand.” (Klaasen and Sitzman. 2000:44).

Indeed, “technology has become a critical productivity tool for enrolment management professionals [...] Productivity gains are being achieved by shifting more applications, financial aid, and registrar activities to the web; by using predictive models to improve the yields of recruiting and admissions activities; and by using database and enterprise resource planning systems to automate previously paper- and labour- intensive processes.” (Eduventures, 2004:4).

#### **4.4.2 WEB-BASED MARKETING STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

In response to student needs, institutions of higher education have begun the process of ‘virtualisation’. Providing visual images, online admissions, as well as access to publications, course information and other aspects of student life are important aspects of the process which uses the web as a marketing tool (Columbia University, 1995, as cited in Kittle and Ciba, 2001).

The importance of the web in an overall marketing effort has been demonstrated by many colleges and universities (Conn and Shupp, 1998; Snyder *et al.* 1998). The cost effectiveness of the media is considered a ‘great equaliser’, thereby permitting institutions of higher education, no matter how different in their entrance selectivity and overall academic standards, the ability to effectively market their products and services to prospective students (Klaasen *et al.*, 1998).

In the United States, as access to both computers and the Internet has become nearly universal amongst college-bound students, overcoming previously significant barriers of race and income, college web sites are now a major factor in both the decision to apply and the decision to attend (Art and Science Group, 2001).

Dessimoz and Milkowski (2002) claim that hosting online events is a new way to reach potential students who may not be able to take advantage of on-campus events, such as ‘open days’ (the concept of which is discussed later). This includes providing chat rooms and interactive activities, with experienced advisors on the other end of the connection, in order to provide prospective students with the necessary advice they are seeking.

This type of electronic event also allows institutions to relatively easily collect personal and contact information from prospective students. This may be done, for example, through a simple registration process before the user is allowed to participate in the online event. This data may then be stored in a database and used for direct marketing purposes at a later date.

Dessimoz and Milkowski (2002:163) maintain that “every campaign should have a two-pronged approach – a combination of well-timed print and electronic media, working together as primary and secondary thrusts to targeted audiences”. It would appear, according to Klaasen and Sitzman (2000:45), that institutions across the board have heeded this call. “Small colleges and large universities, unknown institutions clamouring for attention and established ones snobbishly shunning it – all have dutifully created web sites in hopes of attracting more of the decreasing population of today’s college students.”

Commenting on the advent of web-based instant messaging and chat, Sickler (2003:2) claims that “this is how kids communicate in 2003, and if you’re not using it to communicate with them, you’re out of touch... in more ways than one”. Whilst this may be a somewhat extremist view concerning the merits of new communications technology, it certainly demonstrates the extent to which the youth expect organizations to embrace technology and to use it to communicate with them.

The impact that web strategies may have on relationships with prospective students has also been granted some coverage in the literature.

As college-bound students who are members of the “Net-Generation” (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004:116) turn to the Internet, they are looking to do more than surf and browse. According to Tapscott (1998), they are seeking exchanges and deeper impressions that characterize a relationship between individual and organization. Hence, N-Geners (i.e. members of the Net-Generation) don’t want to be treated as statistics, they want to be treated as individuals – that is, as customers or people. Tapscott therefore concludes that new-economy marketers will consider the relationship, not the sale or deal. For this reason, it is argued that relationship marketing should take on added significance.

Marketers therefore need to build one-to-one relationships with customers through customized promotional material, avoid glitzy marketing gimmicks, and devote more attention to straight, information-based messages (Long *et al*, 1998; Middleton *et al*, 1999; Rust and Varki, 1996). Interest in ‘info over expo’ is reflected in a study of college-bound high scholars who, when asked what they most needed from a website, mentioned information on costs, admission, and available majors (Anderson and Reid, 1999). Visual images of the campus and student life are important, but these are assigned secondary importance to the nuts and bolts of admission logistics, e-mail directories, and campus maps (DeMello, 1996).

Kittle and Ciba's (2001:34) research in the United States of America reveals that "the web sites of colleges and universities are evolving to the level of participatory and convenient sites with many institutions beginning to take full advantage of the interactive potential of the World Wide Web. Providing multiple opportunities for two-way symmetrical communication and building pre-transactional relationships are in evidence at an increasing number of sites. Forms for requesting videos and CDs; e-mail contact with faculty, alumni, admissions of current students by degree and/or major; online loan counselling; and online subscriptions to campus news are evidence of increasing interactivity."

Kittle and Ciba (2001) conclude their study by stating that as institutions of higher education continue the process of virtualisation, relationship marketing strategies are likely to become more evident. While it may be true that the mere presence of a web site guarantees no measurable effect on the marketing success of any organization (Klassen *et al*, 1998), the Internet will continue to be "as subtle, as flexible, as pertinent and as persuasive as one-on-one dialogue" (Harvard Business School, 1997:1), promising an attractive interactive future for the recruitment marketing strategies of educational institutions.

#### **4.4.3 ELECTRONIC MESSAGING AS A DELIVERY CHANNEL**

SMS (Short Messaging Service) and MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service) are two cellular technologies which may be used to reach one's target market. SMS consists exclusively of plain text and is limited to 160 characters per message. MMS is the next generation of messaging and allows users to send multimedia messages containing text, images, sound and even video clips.

This form of communication is currently being investigated by retailers, entertainment providers, banks, etc. throughout the world and in many cases SMS/MMS programmes have already been deployed. Grant Baker, freshaMedia director, claims that in Europe, marketers have already adopted SMS advertising as their preferred channel to market for tactical customer communication. He also claims that in South Africa, the early adopters have already seen the benefits and are increasingly using this direct-to-customer channel (ITWeb, 2002).

Furthermore, in a study conducted by MediaBytes (Marketing Mix, 2003), 128 companies were asked to rate the importance of their marketing plans. The use of e-mail, web sites, search engine marketing, SMS and CD-ROM/DVD as marketing tools were rated from most effective to least effective, respectively. Based on this research, it may be concluded that Internet based applications

(e-mail, web sites and search engine marketing) still dominate electronic marketing plans, although this may be attributed to the relative newness of the commercial adoption of SMS. As adoption of messaging rapidly increases (Senne, 2006), it is anticipated that in the near future, SMS (or rather MMS as a next generation version of SMS) is likely to significantly rise in popularity with marketers in terms of facilitating their communication objectives.

In the context of student recruitment, it is suggested that some of the main reasons for using SMS/MMS technology include the following:

- Cost effectiveness – the cost is minimal compared to other forms of communication such as conventional mail (i.e. mail sent through the postal system)
- Immediate delivery – the technology delivers the content from the source to the recipient in a matter of seconds. A ‘delivery report’ function allows confirmation that the message has arrived intact.
- High readership rate – these messages tend to be read as this is effectively equivalent to answering a telephone call for many cellular users
- Spill over effect – due to cellular phones being transported with their users, these devices have a large ‘presence’. The message may therefore be read and/or heard by more than just the recipient when received at any form of social gathering. For example, friends sometimes allow each other to peruse through their SMS/MMS inboxes – this is typically not the case with postal mail or e-mail.

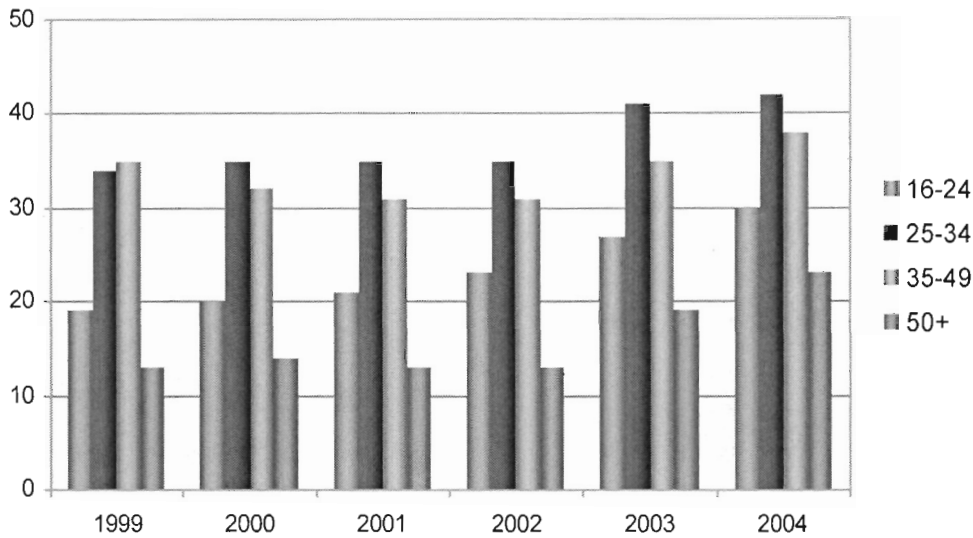
It may therefore be contended that SMS/MMS platforms represent an opportunity to communicate with adolescents and young adults (i.e. the target market when recruiting students). MMS, through its multimedia capability, appears to represent an opportunity in the near future to extend the institutional brand even closer into prospective students’ lives.

#### **4.4.4 THE ROLLOUT OF CELLULAR AND INTERNET ACCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

There are approximately 25 million cellular users in South Africa (Cellular News, 2005). Whilst it is acknowledged that there is some debate as to the accuracy of the numbers of cellular users serviced by the cellular networks (World Wide Worx, 2005), it may be conservatively estimated that between a third and a half of the population has access to a cellular telephone.

In terms of the age groups of the population using cellular phones, figure 4.3 on the following page shows the percentage split and compares this over the period 1999 to 2004.

**Figure 4.3: Cellular phone usage by age group**



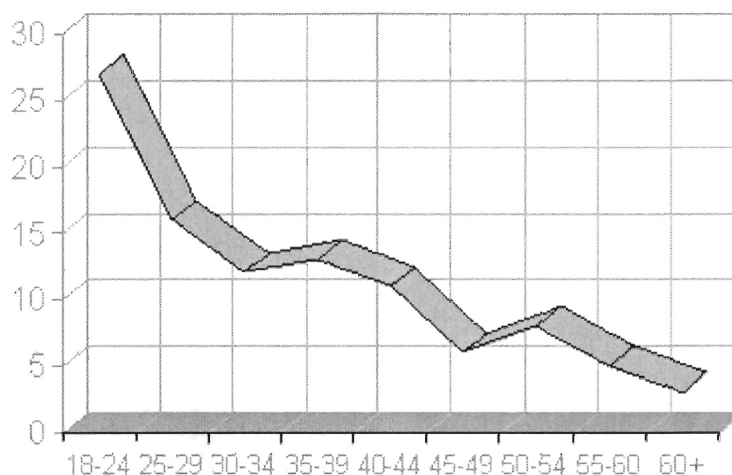
**Source: Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing (2005)**

It may therefore be ascertained that although the age group 25-34 consistently comprises the majority of users, the 16-24 group has shown very promising growth over the period 1999 to 2004. In 1999, only 19% of cellular users were in the age group 16-24. In 2004, 30% of cellular users fell into this age group. This is encouraging and may be a motivator toward justifying the use of SMS/MMS as a communications medium for student recruitment marketers.

Unfortunately, the deployment of Internet access in South Africa doesn't enjoy a similar success story. Since the commercial adoption of Internet services in the mid 1990s, Internet growth in South Africa has been hampered by a number of factors including high computer and Internet subscription costs, poor telecommunications infrastructure, as well as a distrust and fear of the technology (UISM, 2003a).

Nonetheless, the Trend Youth II report (UISM, 2003b) indicates that young adults are the least likely to be afraid to venture online. In fact, they often form the technological experts in the household. This is underscored by figure 4.4, on the following page, indicating that members of Generation Y (those individuals born between 1979 and 1994) are considerably more likely to browse the World Wide Web than their older counterparts. Despite this, the Trend Youth II report advises that economic barriers still pose a significant problem in terms of connecting youths from disadvantaged communities.

**Figure 4.4: Web usage by age profile**



**Source: Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing (2003b)**

The Goldstuck Internet Access report, the barometer for Internet user statistics in South Africa, claims that there were 3.6 million active South African Internet users at the end of 2005, 95 000 of which were scholars (Goldstuck, 2005). However, it should be noted that the figures under review exclude scholars without access at school, but either direct access through home Internet accounts or indirect access through parents at their place of work. For this reason, the number of scholars with direct and/or indirect access to the Internet may actually be considerably higher than reported. Furthermore, it is thought that if the advent of various government and NGO initiatives (e.g. GautengOnline, SchoolNet SA, etc.) to connect schools are successful, this figure is likely to increase significantly over the following few years (Goldstuck, 2005).

In summation, the statistics reveal that *Information and Communications Technology* tools are likely to be accessible to many thousands of South African scholars in the case of Internet access, and millions in the case of cellular access. These tools appear to be being used by the youth to empower themselves in a quest to achieve their potential. Educational institutions would be wise to take cognizance of this phenomenon and factor technology into their marketing programmes, most notably those relating to student recruitment.

## 4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter addressed the themes of brand management, youth marketing, and *Information and Communications Technology* in the context of student recruitment.

Brand management was argued to be pillar on which a relationship orientated student recruitment programme may be built. Specifically, it was noted that building a strong institutional brand is key to enticing customers into a relationship, as there is not always a natural tendency of consumers to willfully enter into relationships. Furthermore, a key benefit of a strong brand is that it exhibits a signal of quality and thereby mitigates perceived risk.

Youth marketing was mooted to be a pertinent issue in student recruitment. Key findings within the literature include that individuals within this age bracket are more mature and confident than their predecessors, more embracing of technology, yet yearn for honest (i.e. non-manipulative) communication from marketers. In this respect, it is thought that marketers and scholars need to be on the same 'wavelength' in order to fully understand each other. Youth marketing is therefore considered to be an aid in bridging this mental impasse.

*Information and Communications Technology* was reported to be an effective and efficient means through which to recruit students. The web and e-mail, particularly, have already been successfully deployed in electronic student recruitment campaigns elsewhere in the world. Mobile messaging systems, particularly SMS and MMS, are argued to also boast potential in this respect. The South African market appears to exhibit encouraging cellular and Internet penetration statistics when considering youth in the medium to upper LSM brackets. This suggests that electronic marketing in terms of student recruitment may indeed prove worthwhile.

The content within the dissertation, until this point, has focused on the exploration of literature relevant to the topic of student recruitment marketing. The majority of the discussion within remainder of this document is dedicated to considering empirical research directed at determining the feasibility, and desirable functionality, of a relationship orientation to student recruitment within the South African higher education sector.



# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **A QUALITATIVE OVERVIEW OF STUDENT RECRUITMENT PHILOSOPHIES & PRACTICES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED**

In the course of this dissertation, both mass marketing and relationship marketing orientations to student recruitment have been brought to light. The former was found to constitute the mainstay method of student recruitment in the literature, whilst the latter, together with three areas for advancing the student recruitment function, have subsequently been explored in a quest to establish a forward thinking paradigm. This approach to the structure of the dissertation was necessitated by the scarce amount of relationship marketing literature specifically dedicated to the topic of student recruitment.

This chapter aims to present a qualitative overview of current student recruitment philosophies and practices in South Africa. This is necessary to obtain a situational analysis of the status quo in the local higher education sector, as well as to gain knowledge of the relationships which exist between the key stakeholders in this respect. This information is likely to assist in shaping the design of the quantitative component of this research and, hence, ultimately determining whether relationship marketing could prove to be a viable means of recruiting highly desirable students.

The first component of this chapter details an overview of the student recruitment marketing scenario in South Africa, whilst the second component introduces the institutions' perspective on interactions between themselves and prospective students during the higher education consideration and application process. The latter component represents a forerunner to the quantitative analysis which considers the students' viewpoint on such issues.

### **5.1.1 MOTIVATION OF THE METHODOLOGY**

As mentioned above, it appears that minimal material has been published on the core aspects of this study, particularly that pertaining to the status quo of student recruitment in South Africa. To this end, emphasis has been placed on acquiring empirical information about the local market through a series of experience interviews and a comprehensive student survey (the latter to be discussed in chapter six). This two-pronged approach was important to assimilate the two views – those held by professionals with the responsibilities of recruiting students into their respective institutions, and the views held by scholars themselves as to the approach they prefer and the areas wherein they pursue personal benefits.

In terms of experience interviews, student recruitment professionals at various institutions throughout South Africa were interviewed. This was necessary to avoid a strong regional bias. Additionally, two experts were consulted in the functional area responsible for deploying *Information and Communications Technology* solutions in the higher education market.

In this respect, Perreault and McCarthy (2005:223) assert that this approach allows for comprehensive coverage of the issues at hand. “The depth of the qualitative research approach gets at the details - even if the researcher needs a lot of judgment to summarize it all.”

### **5.1.2 EXPERIENCE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED**

As mentioned above, a number of knowledgeable individuals were selected for experience interviewing. Several declined, citing confidentiality reasons and time constraints for not agreeing to participate in this process. Those individuals who accepted the invitation were interviewed between June and November 2004 (unless otherwise stated!). These people are listed below.

- Mr Royston Pillay, Director of Admissions Office, University of Cape Town (2003/4)
- Mr Carl Herman, Head: Student Recruitment, Admissions Office, University of Cape Town (2003/4)
- Mr Richard van Huyssteen, Integrated Student Information Systems (ISIS) Project Manager, University of Cape Town (2004)
- Ms Megan Brown, Independent Higher Education ERP/CRM Software Consultant (2004)
- Mr Theodore Messiah, Manager, Cape Technikon (*formerly*) Applications Office (2004)
- Ms Willemien Law, Head of Operations, Stellenbosch University Business School (2003)
- Ms Louise Banks, Western Cape Head, Varsity College (2003)
- Mr Jakkie Erasmus, Student Advisor, Rand Afrikaans University (*formerly*) (2004)
- Mr Paul van der Berg, Senior Student Advisor, Rand Afrikaans University (*formerly*) (2004)
- Mr Wallace Isaacs, Student Recruitment Manager, University of Pretoria (2004)
- Mr Nicholas Massingo, Senior Recruitment Officer, Pretoria Technikon (*formerly*) (2004)
- Mr Dirk Venter, Recruitment Officer, Pretoria Technikon (*formerly*) (2004)
- Ms Carol Crosley, Deputy Registrar, Student Enrolment Centre, University of the Witwatersrand (2004)

A semi-structured interview process was undertaken. To this end, a copy of the discussion guide used for interviewing admissions staff is attached as Appendix I.

In order to record the views expressed by the parties concerned, concise notes were taken during the experience interviews. Directly after the relevant sessions, more comprehensive notes were recorded as to the proceedings of the discussion. The various views were then assimilated, and contrasted, after the series of experience interviews was completed.

A word-for-word transcription was decided against as some of the respondents felt uncomfortable with the usage of a dictaphone to audibly record the interview. Furthermore, due to a single interviewer, it was not possible to capture every word spoken. Thus, in order to put the interviewees at ease and extract the maximum amount of information from the session, this request was honoured and written notes were taken.

## **5.2 THE STUDENT RECRUITMENT MARKETING ENVIRONMENT**

This component of the chapter considers differing professional mindsets, perceived competition in the higher education sector, the multitude of student recruitment practices employed, and relationships between three critical parties in the recruitment process. Hence, it serves to provide an overview of the environment in which the student recruitment function is executed.

### **5.2.1 THE ADVENT OF MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION - THREE DIFFERING MINDSETS**

The notion of marketing in higher education elicited mixed responses from the student recruitment professionals interviewed. It was found that although some institutions resist the idea that they should sell their services or engage in open competition, others have accepted the challenge of competitive enterprise and have recognised that future success is dependent on sustained marketing effort.

In terms of attitudes toward marketing in the field of student recruitment, three cohorts emerged, each featuring a different mindset. These are detailed on the following page.

The first mindset perceives the idea of marketing to be a foreign and unwanted component of the student admissions process. These institutions shun such terms as 'recruitment', 'selling', and 'marketing'. Instead, they claim to exist 'in the name of science' and understand it to be their duty to educate the population without wanting, or needing, to enrich themselves in the process. These institutions tend to be the larger and most preferred institutions that receive an abundance of applications each year and grant a place to a mere portion of the applicants. They derive quality of students through the quantity of applications received. These institutions appear to be extremely satisfied with the status quo and perceive there to be no need to change their practices in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, these institutions regard direct marketing as unnecessary and wasteful. This profile lends itself to the most prestigious public universities in the country.

The second mindset perceives the idea of marketing to be necessary in the foreseeable future, but not at present. These institutions are typically medium to large in size and hold a respected reputation in the marketplace. Although performing well at student recruitment at present, such institutions are investigating how marketing can help improve the calibre of the applicants. Here, the quantity of applications is deemed to be sufficient and the goal is therefore to optimize quality. These institutions realise that competition is intensifying and that they need to be more proactive in the future. However, the situation is interpreted as being far from crisis point at present and no drastic recruitment changes are therefore anticipated in the short term. They are, however, presently investigating the possibilities of direct marketing. This profile lends itself to medium sized institutions in the country that are considering, in the medium term, expanding their institution and growing the student body.

The third mindset perceives the idea of marketing to be a fundamental building block, and therefore integral to their recruitment strategy. These institutions generally enjoy a favourable reputation in the market, yet are still building their brand and feel they have much to prove. They place a premium on the team of recruitment officers who visit schools, and also place emphasis on ensuring that all members of their institution are effectively marketers themselves. Furthermore, they are typically proactive – yet not excessive – in terms of advertising their service, produce high quality paraphernalia to attract prospective students, and have made considerable investments in technology and intellectual capital to drive their direct marketing campaign. They place emphasis on measurable results and see the outcome of their efforts as 'performance'. This profile lends itself to the developing private higher education institutions in the country.

These findings suggest that the three classes of institutions are therefore at different levels of readiness to adopt a relationship (or at least, direct) marketing student recruitment approach. The third mindset cohort is likely to commit in the short term, the second mindset in the medium term, whilst the first mindset is likely to either only commit in the long term or not at all.

The three mindsets detailed above point to alarmingly different perceptions, and responses, toward competition to attract students in the higher education sector. To this end, a relationship marketing stance may be viewed with varying degrees of urgency. Attention is now drawn to the manner in which the dynamics, and nuances, of competition are perceived.

### **5.2.2 PERCEIVED COMPETITION IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR**

The vast majority of institutions interviewed seem to acknowledge the notion that student recruitment in the higher education sector is becoming increasingly competitive. As noted previously, universities are most aware that the pool (supply) of Matriculation exemption candidates has until recently been contracting, and feel that competition to attract the most talented of these individuals has become rather fierce indeed. Universities of Technology appear to be less concerned – these institutions seem to be relatively content with the pool from which they have to draw students. These attitudes are largely within keeping of recent statistics (as discussed in chapter two of this dissertation) highlighting growing numbers of students entering Universities of Technology, but less favourable intakes for traditional Universities. The relevant levels of complacency and determinism that were found to exist are also congruent with the findings pointing to three mindsets (as discussed in the previous section).

However, there appears to be a significant degree of co-operative competition within the higher education sector. Somewhat surprisingly, many institutions don't view the prospective student solely as a customer in the conventional sense, but rather as an individual whose future needs shaping. In this respect, many institutions exhibit a significant degree of ethical behaviour. Accordingly, several institutions claim that it is not their intention to 'sell' the prospective student an undesired product, but rather to advise him/her of the best skills training required in order to realise his/her career ambitions.

This would initially seem to be a contradiction in terms as spurning the advances of a customer is, in many circles, thought to be detrimental to the organization. However, at a deeper level, this

transforms the function of student recruitment from a 'sales orientation' toward a 'market orientation'. Thus, this endorses the notion of marketing as responsibly satisfying a customer's needs and wants, and not superficially convincing the individual to believe that (s)he has latent needs which, in fact, (s)he don't possess.

Nonetheless, analysing this stance further, the above may actually be an internally motivated, as opposed to a noble, response. Public institutions were found to be most concerned with throughput rates due to the pressure placed on them, by the government and community, to ensure that their students graduated in the prescribed timeframe. If students are unsuited to their course of study, it is thought to be likely that they will either deregister from the diploma/degree at some point, or else require one or more additional years of study before graduating. Furthermore, lower throughput rates negatively affect an institution's reputation (or brand, in marketing terms). The phenomenon of students staying longer in the system is also associated with an increased workload on student advisors and counselling services. Owing to the fact that a significant number of public institutions receive more applicants than there are academic places available, it seems logical for them to be honest with prospective students if there is deemed to be a mismatch between the individual's desired course of study and the educational services that the institution offers.

Another finding revealed that traditional Universities and Universities of Technology generally perceive themselves to be competing in different market segments. These institutions therefore appear to be orientated toward recruiting fundamentally different 'customers'. For example, traditional Universities tend to view their target market as scholars who are more theoretically or analytically orientated, whilst the ideal University of Technology candidate is likely to be more practically inclined. Whilst there is certainly an area of overlap, many institutions feel that their student bodies (and therefore their target market) are fundamentally different in stature. It is therefore thought that the two classes of institutions, to a large extent, may be competing in different market segments.

One seemingly unorthodox stance was reported by a University of Technology that believed a prominent (and rapidly growing) private college in the area to be an insignificant threat in terms of competition. Rather, it saw the college as a consort, thereby serving the function of supplying it with prospective students. This notion is motivated by the fact that many scholars who have passed their matriculation exams, yet not qualified to enter the University of Technology, will choose to spend a year or two at the private college, upgrading and enhancing their skills, and subsequently apply and be accepted into the University of Technology. However, due to the fact that the private

college is expanding at an alarming rate, it was acknowledged that this phenomenon may at least be cause for concern in the foreseeable future. This anomaly does however illustrate how a skewed view of competition may be adopted in a seemingly unconventional higher education market.

The advent of international institutions competing in the local market also prompted debate. One particular senior recruitment officer felt that the 'real competition' in the higher education sector will be generated by the international institutions in the near future. It is thought that these players hold considerable credibility, as well as an international recognition status that is most desirable to many South African students. In effect, this system provides students with an internationally accredited diploma/degree, although obtainable through local study. This also has an element of exclusivity attached to it, which is thought to enhance the status of these students and graduates. However, this may simply be a minority view, due to its limited support at this point in time.

In summation, competition in the higher education market seems to contradict the norms of a classic market in certain respects. However, the general consensus appears to be that competition amongst public institutions is relatively subtle at present, yet competition from private institutions is becoming considerably fiercer. Public institutions, on the whole, tend to exhibit minimal concern regarding competition, although it is acknowledged that this stance may need to be reviewed in the medium to long term. In contrast, it would appear that private colleges, as always, are determined to fight for their survival by continuing to push boundaries and by being assertive with respect to their marketing campaigns. Again, the results suggest that different classes of institutions are at different stages of readiness to escalate their marketing efforts to a relationship orientation.

The specific means by which students are currently recruited are explored in the following section.

### **5.2.3 STUDENT RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES**

The majority of the literature reviewed focused on the recruitment marketing activities of institutions in foreign markets. The series of experience interviews focused on the local market and yielded a similar scenario, albeit with a number of differences. Table 5.1 (on the following page) summarizes the recruitment marketing practices employed by institutions in South Africa, and distinguishes between mass marketing techniques and direct marketing techniques. It should however be noted that it is debatable as to the manner in which certain activities are classified.



Furthermore, some of these practices are undertaken voluntarily and enthusiastically, others are undertaken reluctantly due to coercion, and therefore somewhat against the will of the institutions themselves. These concerns are addressed in the ensuing discussion.

**Table 5.1: Mass and semi-direct/direct marketing practices employed by student recruiters**

<b>Mass Marketing Practices</b>	<b>Semi-direct and Direct Marketing Practices</b>
(5.2.3.1) Radio, television and print advertising	(5.2.3.3) In-school presentations
(5.2.3.2) Outdoor sponsorship	(5.2.3.4) Careers evenings at schools
	(5.2.3.5) Career exhibitions for grade 11 and grade 12 scholars
	(5.2.3.6) Open days at the actual institutions
	(5.2.3.7) Print sponsorship of school products and publications
	(5.2.3.8) Recruitment via an institution's alumni
	(5.2.3.9) Database/direct marketing to senior scholars identified as prospects

### **5.2.3.1 RADIO, TELEVISION AND PRINT ADVERTISING**

Advertising in the mass media appears to hold minimal favour amongst the institutions surveyed. However, reasons for running advertising campaigns are plentiful. These range from simplistic brand building exercises to focused campaigns aimed at stimulating a desired response from a segment of prospective applicants. More typically though, advertising in the mass media is claimed to be used to convey information regarding certain events and exhibitions e.g. open days and career evenings (the concepts of which are explained later). Advertising is also said to be used to promote specific programmes that are new and unknown, and therefore likely to be undersubscribed.

Most of the institutions surveyed prefer to utilize other communication options, and claimed minimal advertising in the mass media. Furthermore, advertising objectives were cited as being typically tactical rather than strategic in nature. For example, advertising is intended to heighten awareness of the institution at critical times rather than being used to secure favouritism within the target market. Institutions appear to realise that their reputation (brand) is unlikely to be significantly developed through a mass media campaign – credibility building exercises, and not general advertising, is thought to be required for this purpose.

Contrary to the apparent short-comings of mass media advertising as an effective marketing tool, one institution highlighted a very effective radio campaign, and another institution reported a successful television advertising campaign. However, the objectives of each campaign were said to be tactical. The radio campaign was aimed at increasing awareness of the institution around its applications window, and the television campaign was primarily focused on stimulating a more geographically widespread source of applications. Both campaigns were aired before and during their respective institutions' applications window. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that both campaigns were conducted on a national basis, and that both institutions tend to attract a significant number of scholars from outside of their respective provinces. The conclusion may therefore be drawn that radio and television campaigns are most effective if conducted on a large scale basis. This seems plausible due to the advertising production costs involved and the spill-over effect of these media (i.e. there are no regional television stations, and many popular youth radio stations are broadcast nationwide).

Print advertising is generally undertaken to promote specific courses (for example, adult education courses) or to create an awareness of new diplomas/degrees introduced. Furthermore, this form of advertising is claimed to be the most viable mass media for publicising special events. However, this is typically confined to commercial newspapers.

### **5.2.3.2 OUTDOOR SPONSORSHIP**

Outdoor sponsorship was not found to be particularly common, although a few institutions reported that pressure was placed on them by local schools to assist with the funding of certain projects. This form of sponsorship appears to be in the same format as that undertaken by corporate sponsors (e.g. Coca-Cola), whose logos may be found on scoreboards on school sports fields, or alternatively on school fences so as to create a display for passing traffic.

### **5.2.3.3 IN-SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS**

This is seen, across the board, to be the most effective and efficient forum for accessing the target market and hence the ultimate component of the student recruitment drive. It is perceived to be the most direct route in accessing prospective students. However, these presentations are often conducted in a short space of time (30-60 minutes) as schools face pressure from a variety of institutions to allow them a time slot to present to their senior scholars. A number of institutions

highlighted the need to conduct presentations at the top hundred schools across the country – not always feasible, but a goal nonetheless.

In the case of an extended time slot being granted to the institution, this opportunity is then taken to allow a panel of speakers to address the audience. The panel may include members of the Student Representative Council, senior students at the institution, or even representatives from certain faculties who may wish to publicise undersubscribed academic programmes.

The content of these presentations focuses primarily on the academic aspects of the institution, yet is extended to cover social aspects as a secondary concern. The main topics surround the specific diplomas/degrees on offer, entrance requirements, application procedures, and the likelihood of graduates finding employment (both within and outside of South Africa) after completion of studies. Schools often place pressure on the presenters to advise students on their career path as opposed to merely presenting a sales pitch for their specific institution. However, it is accepted that the merits of the specific institution will be highlighted, yet direct comparisons with other institutions are strictly forbidden in an unwritten, yet seemingly well understood, code of conduct.

The presentation is normally concluded with a question-and-answer session. Common questions include those regarding the specifics of academic programmes offered; the international recognition status the institution holds; tuition fees; bursaries and scholarships; etc.

Student recruitment marketers warn that although in-school presentations typically comprise the best opportunity to ‘sell’ the institution to the target market, confidence displayed by recruiters should not be perceived as arrogance, as this is considered detrimental to the recruitment programme. It would appear that institutions seen to be unfriendly toward prospective students are shunned, and in some instances discarded completely.

#### **5.2.3.4 CAREER EVENINGS AT SCHOOLS**

Career evenings are usually held to advise parents of the future study options available to their children. Parents of scholars who are in, or entering, their senior years of high school are encouraged to attend these sessions.

Career evenings – also known as parent evenings in certain circles – are typically organized at a host school, and representatives from several institutions (primarily from surrounding areas) are

then invited to address these parents and answer their questions. For the institution, this forum serves the dual purpose of informing parents about the career path possibilities for their children (in terms of subject choice at high school, future career options, etc.) and also allowing the institution to ‘sow the seed’ and endear themselves to individuals who may have an influence on the scholar’s future decision of a place of further study.

These events are usually publicized through word of mouth, via school newsletters, in community and regional newspapers, through churches, etc.

#### **5.2.3.5 CAREER EXHIBITIONS FOR GRADE 11 AND GRADE 12 SCHOLARS**

These exhibitions are managed by the Career Exhibition and Information Association and attract an estimated 120 000 to 150 000 scholars per annum. The events are typically held at a central location in a district, or may even be held at a specific tertiary institution if the event is a small-scale one. Many institutions are represented at stalls containing both academic advisors and promotional literature. Schools often organize trips for classes or entire grades to attend these events.

Institutions, however, describe many of the scholars that attend, particularly those in their penultimate year of high school study (i.e. grade 11), as ‘vacuum cleaners’ that collect all the material yet are not particularly serious about their tertiary education studies. Nonetheless, it is noted that those scholars who take the trouble to converse and engage with the advisors are usually the serious prospects. In this respect, it is claimed that if an advisor manages to effectively communicate with a serious prospective student, this scholar will encourage his/her peers to join the fray. Therefore, following a successful interaction between the two parties, the scholar will invariably return after a short period of time with his/her fellow scholars (who have been found to be of a similar academic desirability) for further consultation. Thus, it may be argued that this personal interaction and the word-of-mouth exposure is where the true benefit of this event lies.

Due to the large numbers of scholars involved, as well as the limited contact with prospective students, this forum is argued to be a semi-direct marketing strategy at best. That said, little research has actually been performed on the effectiveness of the paraphernalia distributed at these events. For this reason, considerable benefit may actually be obtained through the mass dissemination of promotional literature. Due to these ambiguities, it is somewhat debatable over whether this should be classified as a mass or semi-direct marketing forum.

### **5.2.3.6 OPEN DAYS AT THE ACTUAL INSTITUTIONS**

All institutions reported that they hold open days (organized and run by themselves) whereby prospective students can visit the campus on specific days in order to attend informative presentations, collect paraphernalia, and engage with administrative and academic staff on a face-to-face basis. Here, the various departments and faculties are represented and provide the scholar with an opportunity to enquire about his/her intended course of study, often through engaging with current students and learning about their own experiences. Additional stalls, promoting scholarships, bursaries, and financial aid are also included in the mix. It is claimed that this event offers enormous benefit to prospective students.

Furthermore, institutions often use these events to ‘whet the appetite’ of prospective students by organizing practical demonstrations, showcasing student facilities (e.g. computer labs, library collections, etc.) and even arranging corresponding social events.

### **5.2.3.7 PRINT SPONSORSHIP OF SCHOOL PRODUCTS AND PUBLICATIONS**

It would appear that where institutions do engage in school media advertising, this is frequently done under a state of duress. In order to maintain relationships with key feeder schools, many institutions are coerced into paying for advertising space in school year books, sponsoring school sports kits, etc. This is thought to be similar in nature to outdoor sponsorship, except aimed toward an internal – rather than an external – audience. Although this is deemed to be unlikely to yield benefits matching or exceeding the monies paid, this is often agreed to as a token of good faith and a means to strengthen the relationship. It is, however, argued by the schools that effectiveness of this form of advertising is maximized through exposure to the core target market for student recruitment marketers.

### **5.2.3.8 RECRUITMENT VIA AN INSTITUTION’S ALUMNI**

A largely unexplored avenue in the local market is recruitment through an institution’s alumni. In this respect, alumni may be viewed as more than a source of funding, and thereby also seen as a valuable source of leads for prospective students. Furthermore, if a strong and prosperous relationship exists between an alma mater and her alumni, referrals and personal recommendations are bound to follow as a matter of course.

It is thought that alumni are likely to be connected (either through the workplace, or alternatively through friend and/or family social networks) to the individuals that institutions consider desirable prospects. This method of recruitment is generally used by smaller institutions where the personal connection is imperative, and is an avenue used comparatively more frequently outside of South Africa (particularly in the United States of America). For this reason, it appears that there is unlocked potential in this approach.

#### **5.2.3.9 DATABASE/DIRECT MARKETING TO SENIOR SCHOLARS IDENTIFIED AS PROSPECTS**

This form of direct marketing entails obtaining a list (or database) of prospects – typically grade eleven and grade twelve scholars – and then communicating with these individuals on a one-to-one basis in the hope that they will develop an affinity toward the specific institution. The institution's aim is therefore to elevate itself above the competition, with the intention of subsequently becoming the scholar's favourite choice of a place of further study.

Database/direct marketing elicited mixed responses from the institutions surveyed. Most institutions concede that they are not practicing this form of marketing at present. Some institutions claim to have tried the practice unsuccessfully in the past, and either terminated the programme due to the high costs involved and/or the perceived ineffectiveness thereof. Other student recruitment officers feel that the mechanics surrounding the implementation of a database/direct marketing strategy are quite daunting. In essence, they regard the process as being too technical and/or complicated, and feel that it is not easily manageable for this reason. Instead, they appear to be more concerned with stimulating awareness and creating mass appeal for their institution, and then focusing on the processing and effective handling of applications received.

Additionally, it is claimed that schools are often wary about releasing the personal and academic details of their scholars to tertiary institutions. However, this support is imperative to the success of the operation as a lack of data would cause the programme to grind to an abrupt halt. Furthermore, private schools are mentioned as being particularly cautious about releasing, or even co-operating in the release of, details of their scholars to institutions – irrespective of the relationship between school and institution. In essence, this is cited as an invasion of privacy.

Many renowned institutions are also cautious about emulating direct marketing strategies similar to those employed by private colleges. In this respect, institutions appear to be concerned about

sending out the wrong signal by ‘harassing’ or ‘irritating’ potential students by encroaching on their private time and space. This negative stigma is also perceived to be cause for concern.

However, it is thought that at least one student recruitment officer deliberately underplayed the merits and potential of database/direct marketing due to the perceived competitive advantage it is expected to deliver to the institution. For this reason, the views (particularly the apparent scepticism) collected in this regard should be interpreted with caution.

In summation, student recruitment activities were found to be predominantly executed on a semi-direct marketing level. Neither of the extremes (i.e. mass marketing and direct marketing) appears to be particularly favoured.

The notion of ongoing, direct communication between parties for competitive gain is not limited to that between the institution and prospective student. To this end, the following section extends the discussion by considering how inter-organizational relationships are being acknowledged, and developed, in the higher education sector to ascertain preferential treatment for institutions choosing to employ such a dimension to their recruitment strategy.

#### **5.2.4 DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS AND SCHOOLS**

The issue of developing relationships between institutions and schools was also explored in the series of experience interviews.

It would appear that institutions consider relationships with schools to be absolutely critical. This is due to the fact that schools provide these institutions with access to their target market – in effect, acting as ‘information gatekeepers’. This is especially true in the case of key feeder schools, with which the relationships are deemed to be of pivotal importance to the respective institutions. Feeder schools may be described as those schools that supply the institution with a significant number of students on an annual basis. It is felt that these relationships, or the lack thereof, may count heavily for or against the success of an institution in the medium to long term. For this reason, institutions are particularly concerned about maintaining healthy relationships with schools, sometimes at considerable cost.

Guidance councillors, senior teachers and school principals appear to be the parties with whom institutions most frequently interact. School principals are often instrumental in setting up relationships, which are subsequently continued with guidance councillors or senior teachers.

However, it was voiced by the institutions surveyed that guidance councillors and/or senior teachers are particularly inclined to recommend institutions where they were enrolled as students in previous years. In order to overcome this bias, the institution therefore needs to persuade these individuals of the merits of their own offerings. It is felt that this should be achieved in a sincere manner, and not merely through the provision of financial incentives. The latter is considered extremely unethical behaviour and is a practice reportedly, but not necessarily, shunned by the vast majority of schools and institutions affected.

Whilst most relationships are maintained between an institution's student recruitment staff and the guidance councilors at schools, there is concern amongst several institutions that in future relationships may no longer be maintained through guidance councilors, but rather through senior teachers or heads of grades at the respective schools. The reason for this anticipated change in structure is that former Model C schools are being placed under intensifying pressure to reduce costs across the board. This has therefore resulted in a number of posts for guidance councilors being made redundant. In poorer schools, guidance councilors have traditionally been an unaffordable luxury and these duties have therefore been performed on an ad-hoc basis by another member of the teaching staff. It is expected that in the future, affluent (particularly private) schools will retain guidance councilors whilst other schools will relinquish these posts and simply train senior teachers in these skills. An alternate view suggests that in future, headmasters may then manage the relationships with institutions.

Based on the premise that such relationships are a critical factor for success, it may be argued that institutions should maintain regular interaction with prominent schools so as to ensure that their institution is continuously held in the limelight. To this end, institutions consider it desirable for 'partnerships', if not 'friendships', to develop between the parties involved. Schools may also be in a position to benefit from this alliance. It is reported that schools particularly appreciate being informed about the progress of their past scholars – especially those individuals who are engaged in postgraduate studies. This is due to the fact that schools take pride in the knowledge that they were responsible for the tuition of excellent tertiary education students in their formative years. Furthermore, high schools often use this information in their own communications when recruiting scholars from primary schools.



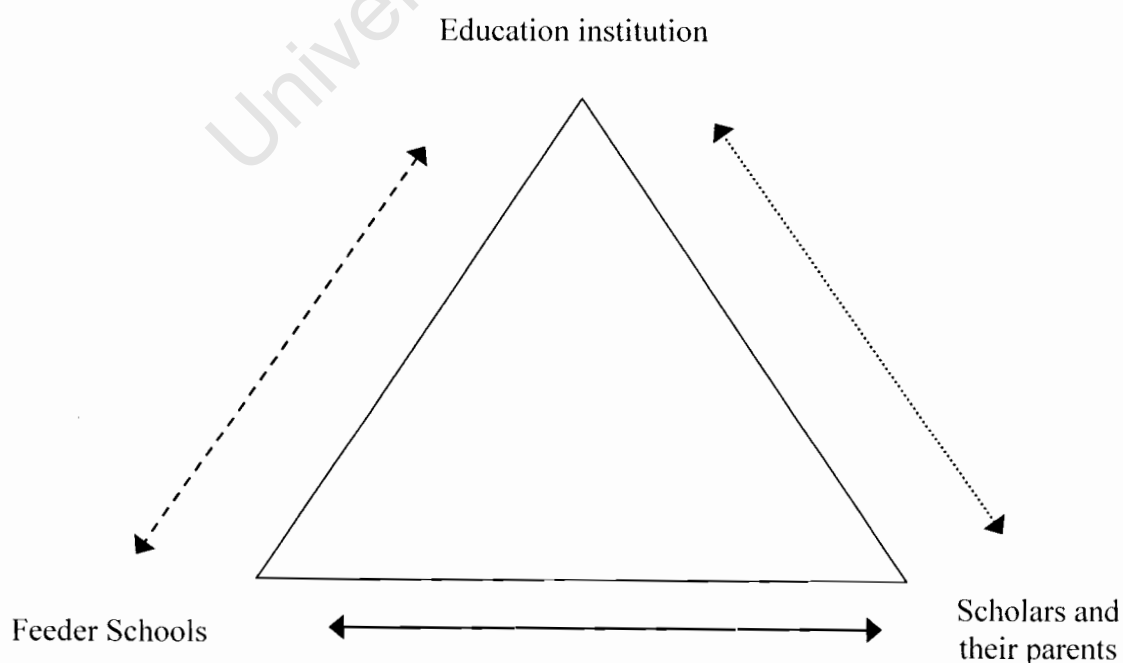
In terms of initiating relationships with schools, this is reported to be a difficult exercise in certain contexts, particularly in marginalized communities where schools are often sceptical of institutions' advances. However, as stated by one student recruitment officer interviewed, "the shoe is often on the other foot". On occasions, certain schools take the lead and approach institutions in an effort to establish a relationship. This is not always desirable for the institutions approached, as many of these schools have poor matric exemption rates and offer low standards of tuition, yet want the benefits (advertising in their school magazine, provision of bursaries, etc.) typically provided to secure the support of key feeder schools.

Examining the relationship between schools and institutions at a deeper level, and integrating a third party (the scholar and his/her parents) into the fold, a relationship triangle emerges. This phenomenon is discussed, and analysed, in the following section.

### 5.2.5 THE 'STUDENT RECRUITMENT RELATIONSHIP TRIANGLE'

The 'Student Recruitment Relationship Triangle', depicted in figure 5.1 below, is a relational map – conceived from findings during the experience interviews – highlighting the relationships between three key constituents in the student recruitment process, namely the higher education institution, feeder schools, and scholars and their parents.

**Figure 5.1: The 'Student Recruitment Relationship Triangle'**



The strongest relationship appears to be that between the school and its scholars. The school, through its education services, is often regarded by scholars as the gateway to a brighter future. It is the establishment that provides the passage to passing matric (grade 12) and entering either the workplace or the tertiary education sector. In essence, it is the means to an end for its scholars.

The relationship between the school and its scholars has typically been developed over a number of years, and possibly even a number of generations in the cases of entire families attending a single high school. It is frequently the case that scholars who perform well, academically, have a strong rapport with their teachers and are likely to trust and respect them. In terms of the higher education selection process, scholars are likely to favourably consider those institutions promoted by their teachers.

Conversely, due to this close relationship, schools are likely to be in a position to judge which of their scholars comprise the best academic prospects for further study. They have extensive academic records at their disposal and would tend to know about their scholars' extra-curricular activities (in many cases these are organized through the school). This imparted knowledge is most useful to higher education student recruitment marketers when attempting to identify prospects for a relationship orientated student recruitment programme. In other words, schools could be sought to assist in the segmentation process by being requested to nominate the outstanding scholars they feel are worthy of being selected for such a recruitment programme.

The moderate strength relationship in the triangle is that between tertiary institutions and their feeder schools. Higher education institutions value their relationships with these schools due to the fact that schools often act as gateways for accessing potential students, and are also influencers on their tertiary education decisions. The majority of higher education institutions surveyed reported having a dedicated member of staff, the 'schools liaison', managing these relationships.

Relationships with schools afford higher education institutions opportunities which extend beyond the realm of marketing. One such additional factor is the ability of institutions to discern academic standards and, hence, suitability of candidates for a student recruitment programme. To this end, academic standards set at a well known and respected high school, like the primary feeder school for a prestigious university, are likely to be especially high. On the other hand, it is felt by certain institutions that the standards set at certain lesser known private colleges are often surrounded in mystery. For this reason, provisional matriculation results (often considered by institutions for

preliminary assessment purposes) may in fact be inflated due to lower academic standards. A closer relationship may shed some light on such matters.

The weakest relationship is that between the higher education institution and the prospective student. In part, this is due to the notion that the traditional applications process is very impersonal in nature. Prospective students will typically only have experienced the institution through its web site, promotional literature, application forms, speaking to frontline members of staff at the institution's admissions office, and/or attending a presentation delivered by a representative from the institution. However, it is proposed that this relationship is paramount to success in recruiting high quality candidates and therefore needs to be developed beyond that of a generic relationship whereby the prospective student is merely viewed as a number. The marketing strategist's challenge is therefore to leverage the power of the relationship between the school and its scholars, so that higher education institutions can 'win over' schools and therefore project a positive image of themselves, through the school, onto prospective students. This holds credibility, a critically important trait in student recruitment, and constitutes unpaid personal communication (Levy and Weitz, 2004). Finally, in the case of highly desirable prospects, this mechanism may then be utilized to accrue relational benefits between the scholar and higher education institution.

If institutions and schools are prepared to enter into a partnership in the proposed relationship marketing context, schools can convey their knowledge, insights and recommendations to institutions, thereby assisting institutions' efforts to recruit high quality students. In this respect, the 'Student Recruitment Relationship Triangle' suggests that institutions can leverage the power of the strongest relationship (i.e. that between the school and its scholars) to strengthen that of the weakest, yet absolutely critical, relationship between themselves and prospective students.

The relationship dimension of qualifying interactions and specifically, information exchanged, between the scholar and various parties (including high school authoritative figures) disseminating tertiary education advice, was included for testing in the quantitative analysis. These issues are explored in the following chapter of this dissertation.

## **5.3 THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONSIDERATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS**

The second component of this chapter now considers the institutions' perspective of the manner in which students experience the higher education consideration and application process.

To achieve this goal, this section of the chapter considers the factors which influence scholars in the higher education decision process, when these thoughts are first entertained, whose advice is deemed to be most credible, etc. Again, this chapter considers these views from the institutions' perspective and is henceforth a forerunner to chapter seven, which continues this discussion by examining these views from the prospective students' perspective.

It is reiterated that the views discussed below were obtained through the series of experience interviews conducted, and therefore assisted in the design and development of a questionnaire in order for the reality of the situation to be ascertained by means of direct exposure to the target market. This would therefore enable the institutions' views to be challenged and assessed. It is believed that such assertions need clarification if a pre-application relationship marketing programme is to be seriously contemplated.

### **5.3.1 THE STANDARD OF SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGHOUT THE APPLICATIONS WINDOW**

The institutions reported that the treatment of prospective students during the applications window is regarded as relevant, yet not critical in the scholar's final decision of a place of further study. Whilst poor performance in this respect may send a signal to the applicant that administration at the institution is lacking, experience appears to suggest that scholars are only mildly deterred by poor customer service at this stage. In fact, institutions perceive applicants to be generally disenchanted with the applications process, across the board, and deem this to be predominantly characterized by inefficient and disorganized processes. The applications process is therefore highlighted as needing improvement, yet is perceived as a relatively insignificant factor in the scholar's decision on where to finally enrol.

Leaving nothing to chance, one institution has taken a serious stance in this regard and has implemented a hotline to deal with complaints and to encourage feedback on the applications process. This constitutes an element of the institution's 'accountability ideal'. For example, as part

of this quest for superior customer service, text messages are sent to individuals who have not completed their application forms sufficiently, in order to get this predicament remedied as quickly as possible. The institution reports that applicants, in turn, have responded favourably to this preferential treatment and that it is experiencing positive returns on its customer service endeavours.

A student recruitment officer commented that the admissions/recruitment team should ideally be services orientated, their 'customer' responses should be efficient and prompt, and that a continual audit should monitor and provide quantitative measurement of the team's successes and failures.

Whilst a weak correlation may exist between poor service delivery in the applications process and a scholar's decision to avoid enrolling at the institution for this reason, it is reported that a relatively strong correlation appears to exist between a potential student receiving superior service in the applications process and the individual's decision to eventually enrol at that institution. However, this phenomenon may in fact be connected to pre-established preferences in terms of a scholar's place of study.

Prospective students' levels of satisfaction with the status quo of service delivery, as well as their suggestions for improvements in this respect, will be analysed in the quantitative section of this dissertation. The following section now considers the institutions' view on the timeframe with respect to when scholars first enter into the higher education consideration process.

### **5.3.2 PERIOD OF AWARENESS AND PROVISIONAL CHOICE OF STUDY OPTIONS**

Based on accounts from the experience interviews, institutions perceive that most scholars intending to enter higher education give serious consideration to their tertiary studies program at the end of grade 9, when they are forced to select the subjects with which they desire to write their senior certificate examinations. This period marks the selection of the intended broad area of tertiary studies, which is usually further refined in grade 11 or even grade 12. For example, scholars intending to pursue technical studies (Science, Technology and Engineering) are advised to continue with the subjects of Physical Science and Mathematics at the end of grade 9. Subsequently, these subjects allow them to make a final choice of a suitable technical diploma/degree at a later stage.

Institutions felt that scholars tentatively choose their institution of study, as well as a means of financing their studies, in grade 11. This is deemed to be the first instance in which scholars feel under real pressure to consider their tertiary studies. It is thought that most scholars intending to enter higher education are largely untroubled by the financing of their studies. In this respect, many scholars assume that their parents will foot the bill for their studies, or else that they will receive a bursary or scholarship to cover the financing thereof. In the worst case scenario, many scholars acknowledge that they might need to acquire a student loan. However, a student loan appears to be unproblematic for some scholars, who feel that they might like to work overseas post graduation and, through earning 'hard currency', settle the loan in a relatively short period of time.

In terms of a place of study, many scholars are thought to know where they wish to pursue their higher education studies by the beginning of grade 11. For most scholars, this is an obvious choice – the more academic candidates tend to apply, and assume acceptance, to the larger public higher education institutions in the country, whilst the less academic candidates realize that private colleges may be the most feasible option for them. The middle of the grade 12 year is considered by most scholars as the last opportunity to apply to the elite public institutions in a quest to be offered an academic place. Institutions report a peak in applications at this time. This also marks a period wherein scholars start to become anxious about their futures and feel compelled to take action. However, institutions also report a flood of enquiries and applications the following January, after the matriculation results have been released. Yet, in most cases, this is simply too late.

The timeframe as to when critical higher education decisions are made will be further explored in the quantitative section. This should provide an indication of the extent to which institutions are aware of the sequence, and timing, of such events. The following two sections now consider the basis on which such decisions are thought to be made.

### **5.3.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING HIGHER EDUCATION STUDY DECISIONS**

This section examines characteristics which institutions believe to affect their recruitment success.

Student recruit professionals identified three key selling points for institutions:

- A prestigious reputation held by the institution, and the faculties and departments thereof
- Being situated in a preferable geographic location (e.g. institutions based at the coast)
- Attractive scholarships and bursaries provided to study at the institution

The reputation of the institution and its constituents is deemed to be of paramount importance. In this respect, it is mooted that the more capable students will refuse to study at an institution that does not enjoy a desirable market reputation – irrespective of the incentives offered to these individuals. Connected to the above points are the themes of an individual's marketability post graduation, and the international recognition status of the respective institution. Thus, it is thought that scholars perceive it to be imperative to hold a diploma/degree from a renowned institution in order to secure a lucrative career in the future.

In terms of offering the right selection of courses/diplomas/degrees that students wish to undertake, these individuals are said to be more careful about the choice of their studies than in previous decades. To this end, it is claimed that students are presently focused on studying toward specific diplomas/degrees (e.g. accounting at Institution A or dentistry at Institution B). In this respect, they are no longer content to enrol in any (typically the easiest) academic programme. Here, it is suggested that this is due to the competitiveness of the job market. In essence, the student simply cannot afford to make the 'wrong' programme choice, thereby wasting time and money. Institutions therefore need to monitor and match this demand with an appropriate supply of academic offerings. If managed correctly, this can significantly enhance the reputation of the institution in the market.

The geographic location is another critical factor. Institutions situated in 'trendy' or scenic regions boast that this characteristic bodes very well for them. One coastal institution notes that its geographic location plays a significant role in their sales pitch in other provinces. The picturesque setting is reported to be particularly appealing to students from areas without natural beauty. Leaving home to study elsewhere also appears to be rather desirable to scholars from rural or otherwise remote areas.

Attractive scholarships and bursaries to study at the institution is yet another critical factor. Prospective students are often not able to afford the sizeable fees imposed by the more desirable institutions. To this end, the full expenditure incurred is often significantly raised when textbook, accommodation, and other such costs are added to standard tuition fees. These extra costs are frequently omitted from initial estimates when performing study cost calculations, meaning that the comprehensive amount is often a rude awakening to prospective students. Here, scholarships and bursaries may be required to discount or even nullify prohibitive fees.

Other ‘selling points’ highlighted as being significant include a stable academic environment, a safe campus on which to study and interact with others, as well as the existence of past students (often referred to as ‘heroes’) who have achieved some form of greatness.

It appears that the standard marketing mix (i.e. the four P’s) can be safely applied as an elementary conceptual framework in this respect. To this end, it appears that Place (geographic location), Price (the student fees, as influenced by scholarships and bursaries) and Product (the academic programmes offered and/or the institutional brand itself) are the three key elements highlighted above. Promotion (how the brand is positioned and managed) may be applied ‘behind the scenes’ to enhance the perception of the above elements.

#### **5.3.4 PARTIES WHO PROVIDE CREDIBLE TERTIARY EDUCATION ADVICE TO SCHOLARS**

Despite a spate of youth marketing literature promoting the view that young individuals, particularly those in their teenage years, are beginning to think and behave in a rather independent manner to the wishes of their parents, student recruiters are of the opinion that parents still play a pivotal role in the higher education decision process. This is often due to the fact that these individuals are the parties responsible for financing their children’s studies and are therefore in a position of authority over how such tertiary education funds are allocated. Furthermore, parents are considered to be extremely trustworthy as they are deemed to have their children’s best interests at heart.

Prospective students are also influenced by where their friends and classmates are intending to study post matriculation. In this scenario, friendships have typically been formed over a number of years within the school environment and it is feared that such friendships may be compromised if company is parted. The expectation of moral support during the initial school-to-higher education transition period is also deemed to be an issue of importance for many young individuals when making plans to study at an unfamiliar institution. For these reasons, scholars are expected to heed the advice disseminated from peers, and even give preference to institutions where their friends have already elected to study. Siblings were deemed to fit a similar credibility profile as they tend to be within the same age group, are likely to have attended similar schools, and are thought to possess a level of closeness to each other. For the reasons mentioned above, the credibility profile of friends and siblings is deemed to be strong.



School teachers and headmasters are also elevated to a position of noteworthy credibility in terms of offering higher education advice. These individuals are seen as possessing valuable knowledge due to the notion that the majority of them have already undertaken tertiary education studies and are therefore likely to be able to speak from experience. Additionally, it is thought that teachers typically have a significant rapport with their classes, thereby boosting their credibility profile. To this end, their views are typically held in high esteem and are further perceived to merit attention through their involvement in the education system.

The media is generally only acknowledged to be a valuable source of information in terms of its coverage of bad news (i.e. disruptions on campuses, exposé of fraud and plagiarism, etc.). Few high school pupils were deemed to read the newspaper on regular occasions and this was therefore seen to be a less prominent form of disseminating credible information to prospective students.

Extended family members were deemed to be somewhat ‘out of touch’ with the tertiary education system, yet there was a significant degree of uncertainty amongst the institutions consulted about the manner in which prospective students felt about advice from these quarters.

Finally, having established an overview of the institutions’ perceptions of the status quo, the issue of a pre-application relationship is raised. In this respect, institutions were given the opportunity to air their impressions on whether such a system is likely to be both beneficial and practical.

### **5.3.5 THE MERITS OF ESTABLISHING A PRE-APPLICATION RELATIONSHIP WITH PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS**

Institutions appeared to be receptive toward the idea of using pre-application relationships to gain a competitive advantage, although most were cautious in this respect, citing prior examples of difficulties with direct marketing campaigns. Nonetheless, the individuals interviewed were enthusiastic to learn about research into the local market which may indicate the feasibility of pursuing a relationship orientated student recruitment programme. However, a number of key concerns were raised. These are addressed below.

Firstly, scholars may only be interested in economic benefits that the relationship has to offer, without actually developing any affinity toward the institution during the pre-application phase.

However, one school of thought advocated that the real benefit may lie in the context of offering social benefits (e.g. recognition of outstanding academic achievement by a prestigious institution, elevated status amongst peers and teachers in the school community, the security of having an established and supported tertiary education plan, etc.). In this respect, this classification was thought to generate social bonds, to the benefit of both parties.

Secondly, if all institutions were to implement this practice, competitive advantage would effectively be lost. Furthermore, the differences between a direct marketing approach and a relationship based approach were often seen to overlap to a large degree. This presented a deterrent to several institutions that had negative experiences with direct marketing campaigns in the past.

Thirdly, resource constraints would necessitate that this recruitment technique be limited for use in recruiting high quality students as opposed to average quality students. Even if this scenario were to be realized, some institutions cited a lack of the relevant resources as being “very prohibitive” at present. For this reason, such a solution would probably only be able to be implemented in the medium to long term.

In summation, a large amount of uncertainty was found to exist with respect to the manner in which such a programme would function and whether sufficient interest would be displayed from prospective students. The quantitative component of this research was therefore designed, in part, to determine if scholars would be attracted by such a proposition, as well as learning about the benefits which would be most appealing to this cohort.

## **5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented institutions’ views on a multitude of issues concerning student recruitment.

Traditional media advertising (i.e. that of television, radio and print) was found to be used for brand building purposes, as well as functioning as a series of cues for creating awareness of upcoming events and deadlines. However, semi-direct and direct marketing practices are typically used to create desire amongst the target market and are therefore employed to create preferences, stimulate behaviour, and even initiate and develop fledgling relationships. Most recruitment practices were found to operate in the semi-direct marketing domain.

In terms of higher education institutions, three mindsets were found to be established. The first mindset exhibits an altruistic view and a conservative stance toward marketing in higher education, the second a concerned and semi-proactive stance, and the third an intense and somewhat aggressive stance. However, an element of co-operative competition was identified amongst public institutions, and intense competition was seldom found to exist. Ethical standards, in general, were found to be high across the board.

The ‘Student Recruitment Relationship Triangle’ was established to explain the relationships between three key constituents in the recruitment process – the school, the higher education institution, and the scholar and his/her parents. The relationship between the school and its scholars was found to be the strongest link, and the relationship between the higher education institution and scholars (or prospective students) was found to be the weakest link. It is therefore suggested that the strongest relationship may be leveraged to strengthen the weakest relationship.

The institutions reported that the treatment of prospective students during the applications process is regarded as relevant, yet not critical in the scholar’s final decision of a place of further study. Although this is highlighted as needing improvement, it is perceived as a relatively minor factor in the scholar’s decision on where to finally enrol. On the other hand, the reputation of the institution, its geographic location, and attractive scholarships and bursaries are considered to be the most important factors. In terms of people influencing their decisions, it is thought that scholars are most likely to be influenced by the opinions of, and advice disseminated by, friends, siblings, parents, and teachers.

Institutions felt that scholars tended to choose their senior certificate subjects, as well as their anticipated academic career path, simultaneously. The specific institution where they wished to enrol, along with the financing of their studies, is thought to only be seriously considered in their final two years of high school.

Institutions appeared to be cautiously optimistic about the possibility of establishing pre-application relationships with selected scholars. However, they pointed to the need for further research before implementing such developments.

The following chapter points to the hypotheses for testing later in this dissertation, whilst chapter eight continues the discussion presented above, albeit from the prospective students’ perspective.

This allows for the impressions of both institutions and students to be presented, in order for a balanced viewpoint to be obtained. This is important if an accurate and unbiased assessment of the recruitment scenario is to be realized.

University of Cape Town

# **CHAPTER SIX**

## **HYPOTHESES AND QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

## **6.1 HYPOTHESES**

Subsequent to the discoveries in the literature review and qualitative analysis, the following hypotheses were developed for testing with the results of the quantitative analysis.

### **6.1.1 PRIMARY HYPOTHESIS**

- **H<sup>1</sup>:** *Scholars in their final years of high school are enthusiastic about entering into a pre-application relationship with a limited number of tertiary education institutions.*

### **6.1.2 SECONDARY HYPOTHESES**

- **H<sup>2</sup>:** *Scholars are likely to place greater emphasis on social needs rather than academic and economic needs whilst maintaining a pre-application relationship with tertiary institutions.*
- **H<sup>3</sup>:** *Scholars place greatest credibility on the advice received from their parents, over and above the advice being disseminated from other parties, when making higher education study decisions.*
- **H<sup>4</sup>:** *The reputation of the institution (i.e. the institutional brand) is the most prominent factor for scholars when choosing a place of higher education study.*
- **H<sup>5</sup>:** *Scholars consider electronic channels to be a favourable means of interacting with tertiary education institutions during the applications period.*

## **6.2 QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED**

### **6.2.1 MOTIVATION OF THE QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

The student survey was administered to first and second year students across three prominent higher education institutions in South Africa. In this respect, Perreault and McCarthy (2005:225) indicate that such an approach has the advantage that “samples can be larger and more representative, and various statistics can be used to draw conclusions”. These students were selected as surrogates for

senior scholars at high school (the target market for student recruitment). This was done for three reasons. Firstly, in order to ensure greater accessibility to the sampling frame. Unfortunately, schools were reluctant to co-operate with this initiative as they saw little direct benefit for themselves. Higher education institutions were, understandably, significantly more co-operative in this respect. Secondly, Bickman and Rog (1998) indicate that respondents that have a moderate to high involvement with the topic under investigation are more likely to participate in the study. All the respondents in this survey had made the decision to continue their studies. Thus, this approach minimised the risk of reaching respondents with absolutely no interest in pursuing tertiary education studies. Thirdly, first and second year students had already engaged in the higher education decision and application process, and had thus already experienced the various recruitment efforts of higher education institutions. These individuals were therefore able to review this in hindsight and assess these efforts, as well as contributing their own opinions and suggestions.

One potential weakness of this approach is that the students' attitudes may have been affected after being in a higher education environment for some time. As an illustrative example of this point, scholars (during their tenure at school) may have regarded their intellectual capabilities and any possible affiliation with a University and/or University of Technology as a status symbol. However, post high school, status may have become defined differently (e.g. integration and acceptance within a certain social group may have taken preference to the individual being considered an intellectual) and thus emphasis placed on alternative factors. In this respect, students may well have forgotten what was important to them, particularly status wise, in a high school environment.

## **6.2.2 SAMPLE FRAME FOR THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

Questionnaires were administered to 895 students in their first or second academic years at three South African tertiary education institutions across the provinces of the Western Cape, Gauteng and Free State. The sample consisted almost exclusively of students from the Commerce, Science, Engineering, and Humanities faculties. The questionnaires were administered between May and September 2004, and were distributed, completed and collected at various lectures during this time.

## **6.2.3 CONSTRUCTION, VALIDATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The questionnaire (attached as Appendix II) was composed, and further refined, through consultation with various academic staff and students at the University of Cape Town.

The draft version of the questionnaire was checked for statistical accuracy and multivariate statistical relevance in association with a senior academic staff member within the Department of Statistical Sciences (Faculty of Science). The questionnaire was further vetted, in terms of readability, by two prominent academics in the Faculties of Commerce and Humanities.

Subsequent to these reviews, the questionnaire was piloted to two groups of students of approximately 10 individuals each. The first group received the questionnaire as modified after consultation with the aforementioned academic staff members. The second group received the questionnaire as modified after the input received from the first test group.

In order to confirm the suitability of the questionnaire, the final copy was later reviewed by another statistician, an educationalist, and a psychologist. It was approved for use by all parties.

During the process discussed above, the following amendments were made to the questionnaire:

- ‘Ranking’ questions (question 4 and question 8) in the questionnaire were replaced with ‘rating’ questions so as to allow for multivariate statistical techniques to be executed. Concerns were also raised that respondents may inadvertently assign the same rank to two or more factors in their haste. A rating system was deemed to be more appropriate in this respect. These factors could then easily be ranked, based on their relative ‘scores’, after the questionnaire was completed and the data captured.
- The introductory paragraph was expanded to provide a clearer explanation of the topic under investigation. Previously, this was too briefly addressed, wherein the opening paragraph included little more than a welcome note and an extended title of the study. However this paragraph needed to be kept as concise as possible due to the fact that this text tended to be skim-read by students.
- More space was allocated for written responses. It was found that as respondents hastily completed the questionnaire, the size of their writing expanded.
- Predetermined intervals were presented to students in terms of the *household (family) gross income* question. Previously, a monetary amount was requested as an input, thereby resulting in a large percentage of respondents choosing to omit answering this question.



- Connected to the above point, a disclaimer was added: “*Please note that the questionnaire is anonymous and all information provided will be kept strictly confidential*”. Respondents appeared to exhibit concern that their family’s financial situation might somehow become known, thereby causing potential embarrassment.
- To ensure that the questions were correctly answered, the comment “*Please make a single cross in each column*” was added to question 1, the comment “*Please make a single cross in each row indicating your answer*” was added to question 7, and the comment “*Please note that each factor should be rated independently of the others*” was added to questions 4 and 8. This ensured that errors encountered in answering these questions in the first test group were eliminated in the second test group.
- The language was optimised to ensure that it remained user-friendly, yet sufficiently clear so as to avoid confusion. A balance – in consultation with the two test groups and academic reviewers – needed to be carefully attained in this respect.

The following minor problems were experienced in the final rollout of the questionnaire:

- In terms of question (b) *ethnic group*, a small number of respondents objected to the term ‘black’, instead preferring the term ‘African’ to be used.
- In terms of question (f) *household (family) gross income*, this question continued to be poorly answered by respondents. It is assumed that many of these individuals were not privy to the knowledge of their respective family’s financial situation.
- A small number of respondents appeared to misinterpret the direction of the rating scale in questions 4 and 8. Likewise, a few respondents appeared to confuse the ‘rate’ and ‘rank’ commands. Highly suspect questionnaires were considered spoiled and this data was therefore discarded.
- Selective answering of questions resulted in a small number of questionnaires needing to be discarded.

## 6.3 PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

The key biographical characteristics of the quantitative sample composition are represented in tables 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 on the following two pages. Unspecified answers in the questionnaires have been excluded from the respondent count.

**Table 6.1: Ethnic Group**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Black	282	31.97 %
Coloured	75	8.50 %
White	435	49.32 %
Indian	51	5.78 %
Asian	17	1.93 %
Other/Non Specified	22	2.49 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>100 %</b>

White students compromise half the sample, whereas black students comprise a further third of the sample. The remainder of the sample consists of Coloured, Indian, Asian and other students.

**Table 6.2: Gender**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	390	43.87 %
Female	499	56.13 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>100 %</b>

The gender composition of the sample is relatively equally distributed, although slightly biased in favour of female students.

**Table 6.3: Faculty**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Commerce	431	48.65 %
Engineering	126	14.22 %
Humanities	218	24.61 %
Science	102	11.51 %
Law	6	0.68 %
Health Sciences	3	0.34 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Commerce students compromise approximately half the sample, whereas Humanities students comprise a further quarter of the sample. The remainder of the sample consists of Engineering, Science, Law and Health Sciences (i.e. medical) students.

**Table 6.4: Date of Birth**

	Count	Percent
1980	24	2.88 %
1981	22	2.64 %
1982	58	6.95 %
1983	127	15.23 %
1984	274	32.85 %
1985	234	28.06%
1986	95	11.39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>100 %</b>

834 out of the 869 (95.97%) respondents specified years of birth between the range 1980 to 1986. The mean year of birth is 1984, resulting in the average respondent being 20 years of age at the time of completing the questionnaire.

**Table 6.5: Matric Aggregate**

	Count	Percent
A (80+)	317	36.90 %
B (70-79)	299	34.81 %
C (60-69)	196	22.82 %
D (50-59)	37	4.31 %
E (40-49)	10	1.16 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>100 %</b>

It may be calculated that 72% of the respondents achieved either an A or a B aggregate in their matric examinations. Furthermore, approximately a quarter of the sample achieved a C aggregate, with the remainder obtaining a lower symbol aggregate. It therefore seems appropriate that the sample is biased in favour of the more academically gifted school-leavers, as this is the primary target market for most public higher education institutions.

## **6.4 SAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS**

It is reiterated (as stated in section 1.5.2) that the intention of this dissertation is not to directly compare institutions. To this end, quality assurance tests were conducted on the samples across the three respective institutions. In the vast majority of cases, ANOVA tests confirmed the data to be significantly homogenous. As reflected in table 6.6 on the following page, most p-values strongly suggest that the null hypotheses of equality across the three groups cannot be rejected. It was therefore concluded that it would be safe (i.e. the margin of error was sufficiently small) to perform the analyses in a non-discriminatory (institution wise) manner.

**Table 6.6: P-values for testing homogeneity across samples**

Question No.	P-value	Samples uniform @ 5% threshold?
Question 1a	0.614	Yes
Question 1b	0.032	No
Question 1c	0.832	Yes
Question 2	0.001	No
Question 3	0.513	Yes
Question 4	0.163	Yes
Question 5	0.292	Yes
Question 7	0.497	Yes
Question 8	0.272	Yes
Question 9	0.110	Yes

Furthermore, the literature would seem to support this standpoint. In similar studies conducted on the higher education study decision process, the vast majority of authors (e.g. Bennett, 2004; Chenoweth and Galliher, 2004; Pimpa, 2003; Soutar and Turner, 2002) found no need to stratify the sample according to the school or tertiary education institution from which the respondents emanated. In fact, many studies (e.g. Lauer, 2000; Perna, 2000; St. John *et al*, 1996) use regional or national databases as the norm. The aggregation of responses in this respect is thus a common occurrence in studies of this nature.

The sample may also be seen to be skewed in favour of groups from previously advantaged backgrounds, as well as reflecting a large contingent of students from the social sciences as opposed to the natural and physical sciences. However, it may also be contended that this skewness of demographics is indicative of the irregularities in the composition of student bodies at several of the more prominent higher education institutions in South Africa. To this end, a representative student body in terms of ethnic group, as cited earlier in the dissertation, is likely to still reflect ‘work in progress’. Furthermore, the larger public institutions tend to have higher numbers of students studying toward commerce and humanities related subjects, as opposed to science, engineering and technology related subjects. Again, there are governmental and institutional goals in place to correct this imbalance, but transformation to date appears to be relatively slow. Therefore, it may be deemed that this skewness in the data is to be expected in a survey of this nature.

However, in order to combat the above biographical differences, routine ANOVA tests are performed to ascertain where students from alternate ethnic groups, genders, faculties and academic standing (determined by using matric aggregate as a proxy) substantially differ from each other. These factors are consistently analysed, and discussed, as possible discriminatory variables.

# **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## **QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS**

## **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter five considered the institutions' view on a host of issues relating to the student recruitment environment. This chapter aims to elaborate on this discussion by focusing on these issues from the prospective students' perspective. These results were obtained during the quantitative phase of the research. The two viewpoints are assimilated to determine whether institutes are acutely aware of, and responsive to, the needs, wants and desires of the individuals in the student recruitment target market.

In terms of the data analysis, p-values have been utilised to scientifically test the significance of discriminatory variables and aspects of multivariate models. In this context, a p-value cut-off point of 0.05 is generally considered to be "significant", with a value less than this suggesting that it is "very significant" to "very highly significant" and a value larger than this suggesting that it is "nearly significant" to "not significant" (Underhill and Bradfield, 1996:197). These definitions have been adopted to assess the outcome of the above mentioned tests.

## **7.2 THE STANDARD OF SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGHOUT THE APPLICATIONS PROCESS**

As alluded to earlier in this dissertation, institutions believe they are falling short of the mark in terms of meeting prospective students' expectations of service delivery during the applications process. However, they believe the situation to be tolerable at present. This assertion required testing through the quantitative analysis. Hence, question 5 in the questionnaire was dedicated to determining whether prospective students are indeed satisfied with the level of service rendered. Furthermore, question 6 probed students as to how the service could be improved in the future.

The questionnaire asked respondents to rate their experiences with the applications process on a scale of "very poor" to "excellent", as well as inviting them to make their own suggestions through the inclusion of an open-ended question.

The ratings with respect to the perceived level of efficiency of the applications process are recorded in table 7.1 on the following page.

**Table 7.1: Respondents' ratings of the applications process**

Frequency table				
	Count	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative
<b>Very Poor</b>	11	11	2.61	2.61
<b>Poor</b>	36	47	8.55	11.16
<b>Fair</b>	162	209	38.48	49.64
<b>Good</b>	173	382	41.09	90.73
<b>Excellent</b>	39	421	9.27	100.00

It may therefore be calculated that approximately 80% of the respondents thought this process to be “fair” or “good”. Only 11% of respondents considered it to be “poor” or “very poor”, whilst 9% of scholars considered it to be “excellent”. The general consensus therefore appears to be that scholars are largely satisfied with this process.

The most prominent grievance focused on the length of time taken for the application to be processed and the lack of feedback both during and after this process. In numerous instances, the suggestion was provided that institutions engage in a higher level of communication with prospective students, and furthermore become more transparent with respect to the process being undertaken.

The following issues were also identified as primary concerns, due to the relatively high number of mentions in the set of completed questionnaires. These suggestions include:

- Maintaining a comprehensive, up-to-date web site. In this respect, the web site should display information about the institution, the courses/diplomas/degrees on offer, academic and residence fees, contact details of student advisors and admissions staff, etc.
- Implementing an online applications system whereby scholars can apply via a web interface. Motivations for this include ease of use for scholars, the avoidance of forms not arriving timeously in the post (particularly when using postal systems within certain SADC countries), or paperwork even being misplaced within the admissions office.
- Ensuring that admissions staff are both well trained and accessible, and therefore in a position to comprehensively deal with basic and advanced queries simultaneously.

The following issues were identified as secondary concerns, due to the moderate number of mentions in the set of completed questionnaires. These suggestions include:

- Instituting greater collaboration with other student support facilities such as financial aid and student housing.
- Reducing or eliminating application fees. Less affluent students were particularly perturbed by the fees charged by certain institutions, especially considering that they may need to apply to more than one institution.
- Ensuring that the applications process is as effortless as possible for prospective students taking a 'gap' year overseas.
- Being more considerate of, and allowing extra time for, the conditions which international/SADC students need to endure. The inefficient postal systems in some SADC countries, and the fact that international students need to acquire specific study permits, were cited as examples of difficulties.
- Including more explicit instructions on the application forms, as well as making these generally more user-friendly. Some students found these unnecessarily confusing and complicated to complete.
- Providing a greater degree of curriculum advice. Whilst it was acknowledged that this may be a problem on a one-to-one level, it was requested that institutions at least provide comprehensive information on study options. Prospective students reported that much of the material was disjointed and outdated. For example, references were sometimes made to a web site that was either many years out of date, or no longer even in existence.
- Ensuring a more accountable process. Two prominent examples include paperwork being misplaced and these applicants automatically being blamed for not submitting the required documents, as well as e-mails not being answered and telephone messages not being timeously responded to.

The discussion above outlines the strengths, weaknesses and relative importance of service attributes in the applications phase. However, before a relationship orientated student recruitment



programme is initiated, a timeframe needs to be established so that relationship development is congruent with the period in which the prospective student is comfortable with addressing the various issues advocated by the institution. The following section is dedicated to exploring this matter.

## **7.3 PERIOD OF AWARENESS AND PROVISIONAL CHOICE OF STUDY OPTIONS**

### **7.3.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS**

As alluded to previously in this dissertation, institutions perceive that most scholars intending to enter higher education give serious consideration to their tertiary studies program at the end of grade 9. Additionally, it is felt that scholars tentatively choose their institution of study, as well as a means of financing their studies, in grade 11. In order for this to be accurately assessed and a timeframe suggested for the initiation of a pre-application relationship programme, question 1 in the questionnaire aimed to obtain insights directly from individuals within the target market.

The questionnaire asked respondents when they first gave serious consideration to various aspects of their future studies. Specifically, the grades in which they first gave serious consideration to (a) their course of study, (b) their place of study and (c) the financing of their studies, were requested. These results are recorded in tables 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4, respectively.

**Table 7.2: The grade in which respondents first gave serious consideration to their future course of study**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Cumulative Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Before Grade 8</b>	62	62	7.44	7.44
<b>Grade 8</b>	35	97	4.20	11.64
<b>Grade 9</b>	52	149	6.24	17.88
<b>Grade 10</b>	142	291	17.05	34.93
<b>Grade 11</b>	225	516	27.01	61.94
<b>Grade 12 or after</b>	317	833	38.06	100.00

Although some scholars pay serious attention to their future course of study from grade 8, a significant increase is recorded from grade 10 onwards. This appears to coincide with the period in which they are required to choose the subjects with which to write their matriculation examinations.

This consideration peaks in grade 12, wherein almost two out of five respondents first gave serious thought to their higher education course of study. Grade 11 and grade 12 accounted for 65% of the first instances in which respondents turned their attention to their future course of study.

**Table 7.3: The grade in which respondents first gave serious consideration to their future place of study**

	Count	Cumulative Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Before Grade 8</b>	59	59	7.19	7.19
<b>Grade 8</b>	35	94	4.26	11.45
<b>Grade 9</b>	47	141	5.72	17.17
<b>Grade 10</b>	116	257	14.13	31.30
<b>Grade 11</b>	222	479	27.04	58.34
<b>Grade 12 or after</b>	342	821	41.66	100.00

As in table 7.2, a very similar trend is evident in table 7.3. Likewise, a significant increase in momentum is recorded from grade 10 onwards. This consideration appears to peak in grade 12, wherein little over two out of five respondents first gave serious thought to their place of further study. Grade 11 and grade 12 accounted for 68.7% of the first instances in which respondents turned their attention to their place of tertiary study.

A significant overlay in the data with respect to the period in which respondents first considered their place and course of study suggests that these factors are typically raised together.

**Table 7.4: The grade in which respondents first gave serious consideration to financing their further studies**

	Count	Cumulative Count	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Before Grade 8</b>	64	64	8.19	8.19
<b>Grade 8</b>	21	85	2.69	10.88
<b>Grade 9</b>	15	100	1.92	12.80
<b>Grade 10</b>	61	161	7.81	20.61
<b>Grade 11</b>	161	322	20.62	41.23
<b>Grade 12 or after</b>	459	781	58.77	100.00

With respect to the period in which scholars first perceive the need to consider the financing of their further studies, it is evident that significant momentum is only gathered in grade 11. In grade 11, approximately one out of five respondents first gave thought to the financing of their tertiary studies, whilst approximately three out of five respondents first considered this in grade 12.

Comparing the data in table 7.4 to that of tables 7.2 and 7.3, a disconnect is realized between the scholar's thoughts of his/her place and course of further study, and the financing of this. Thoughts of financing studies are generally only entertained either in grade 11 or 12. In many cases, this may be due to naivety on the scholar's behalf that their parents are in a position to fund their tertiary studies, or that a bursary or scholarship should be easily attainable. It is suggested that the realization that this may not be the case is only seriously considered late in grade 11 or grade 12 when in-depth discussions in this respect are opened.

The means and standard deviations of the grades in which respondents first gave serious consideration to their course, place and financing of further studies are displayed in table 7.5.

**Table 7.5: Mean and standard deviation statistics**

	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Degree Type</b>	4.66 (Latter half of grade 10)	1.50
<b>Institution</b>	4.75 (Latter half of grade 10)	1.50
<b>Finances</b>	5.06 (Early grade 11)	1.52

*Coding: Before grade 8 = 1; grade 8 = 2; grade 9 = 3; grade 10 = 4; grade 11 = 5; grade 12 or after = 6*

In terms of the data contained in table 7.5, this indicates an almost identical statistical profile for the grades in which scholars first consider (a) their course, and (b) their place, of future study. It was found that, on average, scholars first consider these factors during mid to late grade 10.

The statistical profile for the grade in which scholars first consider the financing of their studies reflects a very similar standard deviation to the above. Yet, it has a higher mean, therefore reflecting delayed consideration. Here, it was found that, on average, scholars first consider this issue early in their grade 11 year.

### 7.3.2 ESTABLISHING POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATORY VARIABLES

Four variables – *gender*, *ethnic group*, *faculty* and *matric aggregate* – were analysed to determine whether each had an influence over the grade in which scholars first give serious thought to their (a) course, (b) institution and (c) financing of future study. The p-values from the ANOVA tests are

recorded in table 7.6. A comprehensive breakdown of the individual ANOVA tests (including hypotheses, statistics tables, and graphical outputs) may be found in Appendix III (pages 177-188).

**Table 7.6: P-values for possible discriminatory variables**

	(a) course	(b) institution	(c) financing
<b>Gender</b>	p = .141	p = .938	p = .793
<b>Ethnic Group</b>	p = .194	<b>p = .003</b>	p = .075
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>p = .034</b>	p = .964	p = .444
<b>Matric Aggregate</b>	<b>p = .045</b>	<b>p = .003</b>	p = .598

It was found, even at the ten percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.10$ ), that *gender* has no influence over the grade in which respondents first gave serious thought to their course, institution and financing of future study.

It was also found, at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ ), that neither *gender*, *ethnic group*, *faculty*, nor *matric aggregate* has an influence over the grade in which respondents first considered the financing of their tertiary studies.

However, using a five percent significance threshold (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ ), it was found that the respondent's *faculty* of choice, as well as his/her *matric aggregate*, have an influence over the grade in which (s)he first considered his/her course of study.

This is supported by Table III.3 and Graph III.3, and Table III.4 and Graph III.4, respectively, in Appendix III. In this respect, it may be interpreted that Engineering respondents first considered this academic path in grade 11, whilst Humanities, Commerce and Science respondents did so in the latter half of grade 10. In the case of Engineering, this may have been when these individuals heard about the extensive career opportunities in this undersubscribed profession and learnt of the bursaries and scholarships available to them. Furthermore, in terms of *matric aggregate*, it was found that A-aggregate respondents first gave serious attention to their course of future study before C-aggregate and then D-aggregate respondents. This would suggest that academic achievers are, in fact, more proactive in planning their futures.

It was also discovered, even at the 1% significance threshold (i.e.  $p \leq 0.01$ ), that *ethnic group* and *matric aggregate* have an influence over the grade in which respondents first considered their institution of study.

This is supported by Table III.5 and Graph III.5, and Table III.8 and Graph III.8, respectively, in Appendix III. In this respect, it may be interpreted that black respondents, particularly, only seriously considered their choice of institution in grade 11, whilst the remaining ethnic groups gave consideration to this in the latter half of grade 10. This may, in part, be explained by inferior career guidance services in previously and currently disadvantaged schools where these issues are not always promptly, or proactively, addressed. It may also be interpreted that A-aggregate respondents first considered their choice of institution in the first half of grade 10, whilst B-, C- and D-aggregate respondents first considered this in the latter half of that year. This would support the notion that the more academically gifted students are at the forefront of planning their future careers and are the first individuals to take this initiative. It would also suggest that many of the advantaged schools, capable of producing a large number of A-aggregate students, have superior career guidance facilities that encourage their scholars to pay attention to their future careers as early as possible.

Subsequent to the establishment of a timeframe as discussed above, an analysis of the influencers of higher education study decisions is discussed in the following section. The section is intended to identify the motivations behind applications behaviour and, hence, where competitive advantage in the student recruitment drive is likely to be gained and lost.

## **7.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING HIGHER EDUCATION STUDY DECISIONS**

As alluded to earlier in this dissertation, the reputation of the institution, its geographic location, and the relevant scholarships and bursaries offered are, inter alia, deemed to be key selling points by the institutions.

Question 4 in the questionnaire therefore aimed to assess which of these factors were important to prospective students in terms of their decision where to enrol. Therefore, from the institutions' perspective, these factors may be considered to be determinants of recruitment success.

### **7.4.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS**

The questionnaire asked respondents about the characteristics most important to them in choosing a place of study. These results are displayed, unclassified (i.e. including all respondents) as well as segmented according to ethnic group, in table 7.7 on the following page.

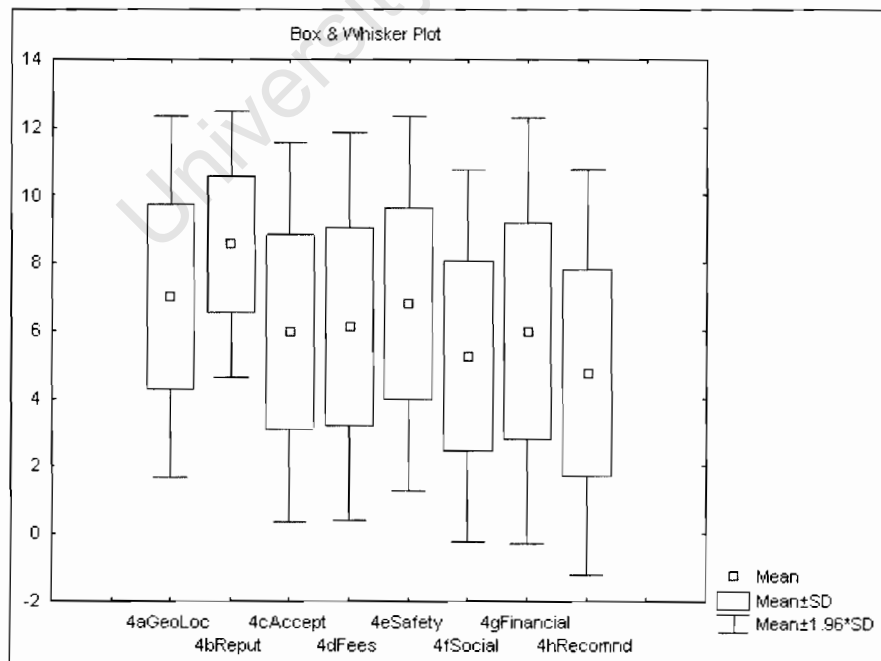
**Table 7.7: Factors determining a student's place of study**

	All	Black	White	Coloured	Indian/ Asian/ Other
<b>Geographic Location</b>	7.01 <b>(2)</b> (2.72)	6.47 <b>(4)</b> (3.06)	7.75 <b>(2)</b> (2.03)	6.58 <b>(4)</b> (2.86)	8.00 <b>(3)</b> (2.36)
<b>Reputation</b>	8.55 <b>(1)</b> (2.00)	8.49 <b>(1)</b> (2.10)	8.63 <b>(1)</b> (1.73)	8.42 <b>(1)</b> (2.21)	9.15 <b>(1)</b> (2.03)
<b>Ease with which accepted</b>	5.97 <b>(6)</b> (2.86)	6.34 <b>(6)</b> (2.85)	5.39 <b>(6)</b> (2.82)	6.65 <b>(3)</b> (2.64)	5.50 <b>(7)</b> (2.61)
<b>Tuition Fees</b>	6.12 <b>(4)</b> (2.93)	6.43 <b>(5)</b> (3.08)	5.45 <b>(4)</b> (2.59)	6.08 <b>(6)</b> (2.97)	7.55 <b>(4)</b> (2.72)
<b>Campus Safety</b>	6.81 <b>(3)</b> (2.82)	7.34 <b>(2)</b> (2.92)	5.99 <b>(3)</b> (2.60)	6.31 <b>(5)</b> (2.85)	8.20 <b>(2)</b> (2.02)
<b>Social programme</b>	5.26 <b>(7)</b> (2.80)	5.32 <b>(7)</b> (2.87)	5.23 <b>(7)</b> (2.78)	4.77 <b>(7)</b> (2.69)	6.10 <b>(6)</b> (2.55)
<b>Financial Aid offered</b>	6.00 <b>(5)</b> (3.21)	6.77 <b>(3)</b> (3.26)	4.83 <b>(8)</b> (2.99)	6.88 <b>(2)</b> (2.44)	6.45 <b>(5)</b> (2.93)
<b>Recommendations from family/friends</b>	4.77 <b>(8)</b> (3.05)	4.30 <b>(8)</b> (3.13)	5.44 <b>(5)</b> (2.73)	4.58 <b>(8)</b> (3.61)	4.80 <b>(8)</b> (3.04)

The mean rating is shown (1=completely unimportant, 10=absolutely critical), with its respective ranking in bolded parenthesis and the standard deviation in italicized parenthesis.

Figure 7.1 illustrates the data displayed in the first column of table 7.7 in a Box and Whisker plot.

**Figure 7.1: Box and Whisker Plot of the factors determining a student's place of study**



Coding: GeoLoc = Geographic location; Reput = Reputation; Accept = Ease with which accepted; Fees = Tuition Fees; Safety = Campus Safety; Social = Social Programme; Financial = Financial Aid offered; Recomnd = Recommendations from family/friends

Based on this data, it can therefore be concluded that the *reputation* of the institution constitutes the most important factor in the respondents' decision of a place of further study. This has the highest mean rating, indicating it is the most critical factor, as well as the lowest standard deviation, suggesting that there is a large degree of consistency across the sample in this respect.

*Geographic location* is considered to be the second most prominent factor and also has the second lowest standard deviation. It is therefore reasonably clear that this constitutes the second most important factor in choosing a place of further study.

*Campus safety* is considered to be the third most important factor, *tuition fees* fourth, *financial aid offered* fifth, *ease with which accepted* sixth, *social programmes offered* seventh, and *recommendations from friends/family* eighth.

In terms of comparing ethnic groups, reputation was ranked across all groups as being the most important factor. Geographic location and campus safety were regarded as being amongst the most prominent factors. However, whilst white respondents considered financial aid to be the least important factor, this was considered by coloured scholars as the second most important factor and by black students as the third most important factor. The social programmes on offer were deemed to be the second least important factor by three out of four ethnic groups, and recommendations from friends and family were assigned the lowest mean rating by three out of four ethnic groups. The latter is likely to reflect a strong view of independence (as discussed previously) displayed by these young individuals.

Whilst the three most important factors and two least important factors are largely consistent across the board, it is nonetheless clear that ethnic groups have different priorities in the middle of this range. Here, those respondents from disadvantaged backgrounds appear to be more need-driven and thus inclined to favour financial support offerings, whilst those respondents from traditionally affluent backgrounds seem to place emphasis elsewhere. It is also interesting to note that coloured respondents ranked ease of acceptance as their third most important factor, which was rated by no other ethnic group as higher than third least important. It is therefore possible that these scholars, many of whom are likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds, feel that the system is not benefiting them. In this respect, the notion exists that many are still receiving a relatively poor secondary education, yet are not benefiting from equity reforms either. It is therefore likely that many of these individuals simply wish to be admitted into an institution and are therefore less particular for this reason.

## 7.4.2 A MULTIVARIATE STATISTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Cooper and Schindler (2006:614) define multivariate analysis as “those statistical techniques which focus upon, and bring out in bold relief, the structure of simultaneous relationships among three or more phenomena”.

One such multivariate statistical tool is factor analysis. Factor analysis is defined by Cooper and Schindler (2006:633) as “a technique for discovering patterns among the variables to determine if an underlying combination of the original variables (a factor) can summarize the original set”.

Similarly, Hair *et al* (1998:90) advocate that “factor analysis addresses the problem of analyzing the structure of the interrelationships (correlations) among a large number of variables by defining a set of common underlying dimensions”. Thus, factor analysis may be used as a data reduction method to simplify the outcome by ascribing this to a much smaller number of ‘factors’.

Based on the above, it therefore seemed appropriate to run a factor analysis procedure on the data containing the considerations believed to be important to scholars when selecting a place of study.

Table 7.8 displays the eigenvalues for the factor analysis model generated. An interpretation of the model is then included on page 120.

**Table 7.8: Eigenvalues for the generated factor analysis model**

<b>Eigenvalues</b> <b>Extraction: Principal components</b>				
	<b>Eigenvalue</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Cumulative Eigenvalue</b>	<b>Cumulative Percentage</b>
<b>Factor 1</b>	2.108602	26.35753	2.108602	26.35753
<b>Factor 2</b>	1.201060	15.01324	3.309662	41.37077
<b>Factor 3</b>	1.096211	13.70263	4.405873	55.07341

The model explains 55.07% of the variance in the data, which is acceptable yet not absolutely conclusive in terms of accuracy. The model should therefore be applied with caution.

The factor loadings, indicating the extent to which each consideration is aligned with each factor, are detailed in table 7.9 on the following page.

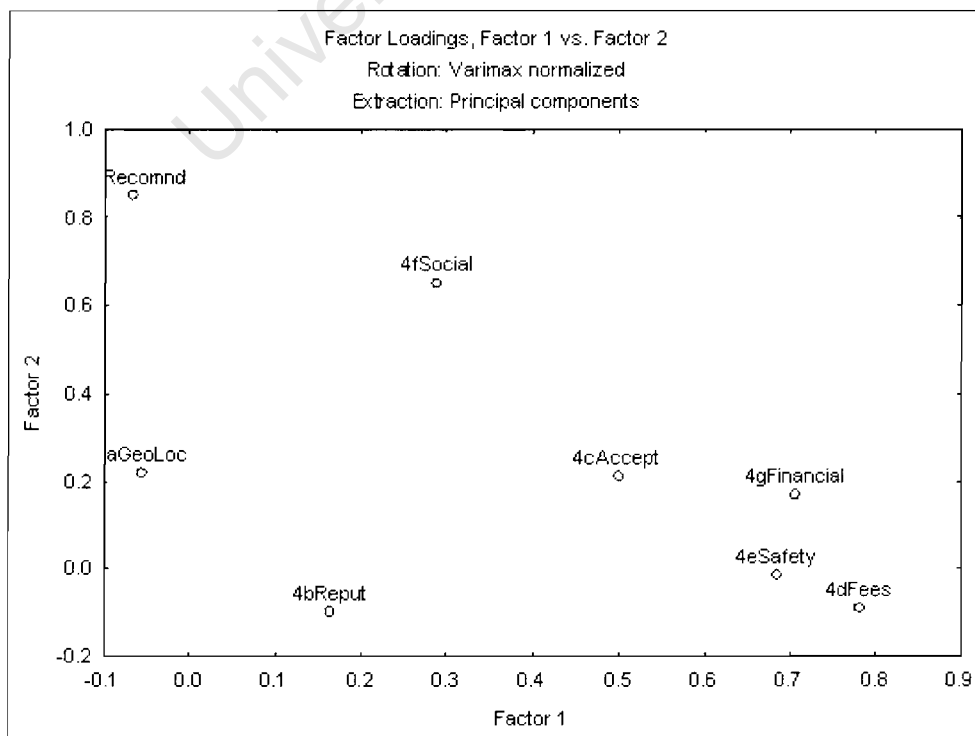


**Table 7.9: Factor loadings in the generated factor analysis model**

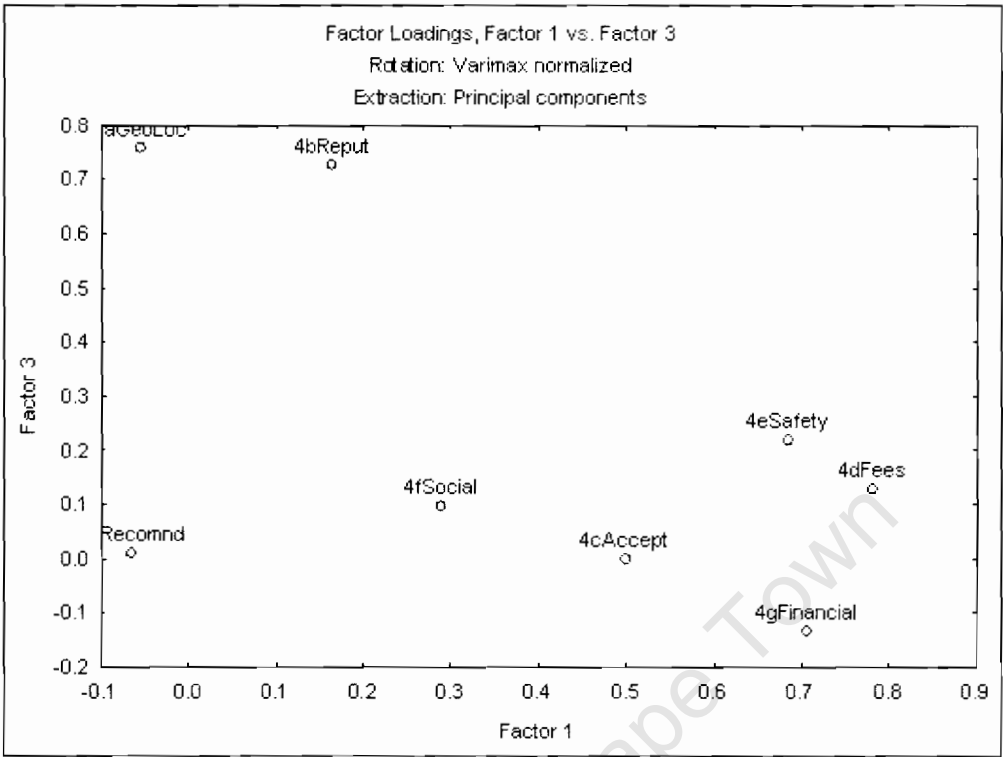
Factor Loadings (Varimax normalized) Extraction: Principal components (Marked loadings are >.650000)			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Geographic Location	-0.024969	0.181254	<b>0.747465</b>
Reputation	0.169313	-0.082937	<b>0.735632</b>
Ease of acceptance	0.478819	0.174095	0.070683
Tuition fees	<b>0.789054</b>	-0.085084	0.118744
Campus safety	<b>0.686966</b>	0.007958	0.186783
Campus social programme and clubs/societies on offer	0.290574	<b>0.666910</b>	0.061748
Financial aid and other funding offered	<b>0.706717</b>	0.158785	-0.176800
Relatives/friends having attended and recommended the institution	-0.069405	<b>0.852553</b>	0.031674
Explained variation	1.941787	1.274170	1.189916
Proportion of the total	0.242723	0.159271	0.148739

Table 7.9 suggests that *tuition fees*, *campus safety* and *financial aid and other funding offered* load heavily on factor one, *campus social programme and clubs/societies on offer* and *relatives/friends having attended and recommended the institution* load heavily on factor two, and *geographic location* and *reputation* load heavily on factor three. Figures 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 represent the factor loadings on two dimensional maps. An explanation of the factor analysis outcome is included thereafter.

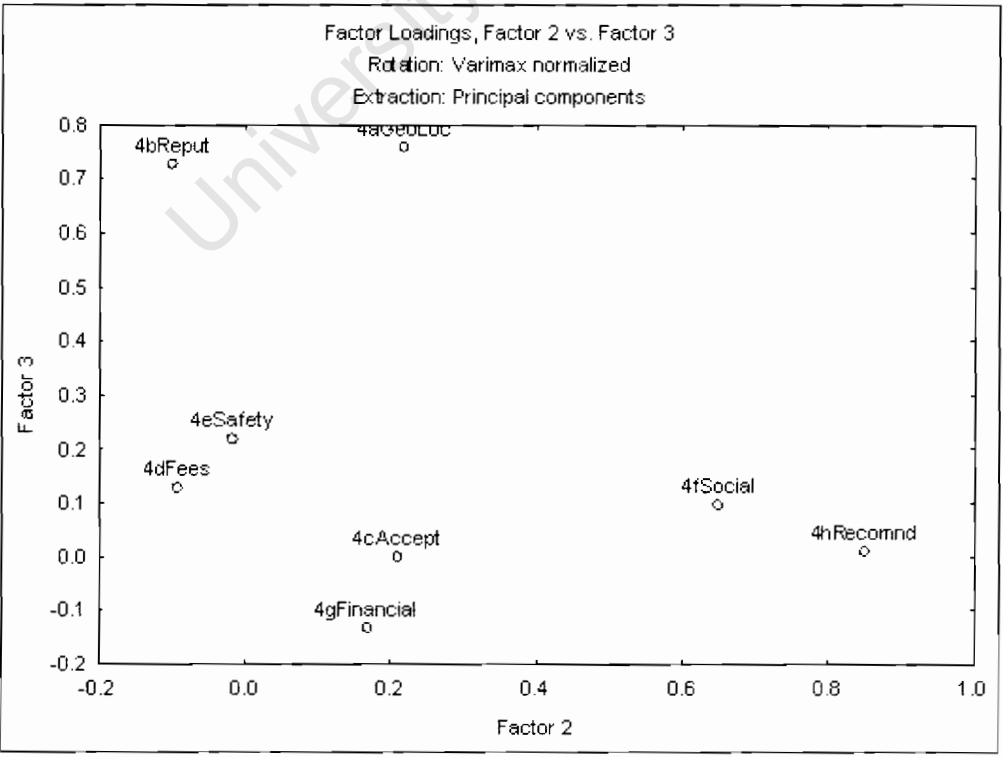
**Figure 7.2: Factor 1 mapped against Factor 2**



**Figure 7.3: Factor 1 mapped against Factor 3**



**Figure 7.4: Factor 2 mapped against Factor 3**



The model identifies three constructs from the eight considerations given as possible influencers.

Factor one consists of *tuition fees; financial aid and other funding options available*, as well as *campus safety*. This construct looks beyond the two most noteworthy variables (reputation and geographic location) and focuses on a further two key issues – that of financing studies and the level of safety afforded to the student. These issues may best be characterized as ‘secondary concerns’ (i.e. important, as opposed to critical factors). Factor one is the most powerful factor of the three as it, exclusively, explains 26.4% of the variance in the data – almost double that of the variance explained by either of the other two factors.

Factor two consists of *campus social programme and the clubs/societies on offer* and *relatives and friends having attended and recommended the institution*. This may be classified as a social construct, in terms of its focus on the interactions with past, present and/or prospective students. Factor two, exclusively, explains 15.01% of the variance in the data.

Factor three consists of *geographic location* and the *institution's reputation*. These were rated as the core variables that stand to make or break an institution's market appeal. This construct focuses on the heart of the decision process and on those factors that an institution should place a premium on either maximizing or minimizing in their marketing communications strategy. However, factor three is the weakest factor as it only explains 13.7% of the variance in the data.

It may be argued that the three factors represent tiers of importance in terms of managing and marketing the institution. Factor three appears to be of strategic importance; factor two appears to be of operational importance; whilst factor three appears to be of importance in terms of value-added service delivery.

Approaching this from the scholar's perspective, this factor analysis model appears to point to three distinct groupings of motivational forces in his/her choice of institution. Factor three seems to encompass critical factors for success (i.e. primary concerns), factor one seems to encompass prominent factors for success (i.e. secondary concerns), and factor two appears to represent a value-add dimension (i.e. tertiary concerns). This information may be used to tailor the promotional efforts of an institution. For example, in-school presentations could be structured around these different themes, or direct marketing efforts could be optimized by matching commitment profiles to one of the above segments and thereafter positioning the institution accordingly.

## 7.5 PARTIES WHO PROVIDE CREDIBLE TERTIARY EDUCATION ADVICE TO SCHOLARS

As alluded to previously in this dissertation, institutions are of the opinion that scholars perceive their parents, friends/siblings and teachers/headmasters to be amongst the parties that offer the most credible higher education advice. This was investigated at a deeper level during the quantitative analysis.

### 7.5.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The questionnaire included a question (namely, question 7) asking the respondents to what extent the following parties provided credible tertiary education advice: *school teachers and headmasters*, *parents*, *extended family* (i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.), *friends and siblings*, and *journalists* (i.e. the media). Respondents were asked to rank this advice as either holding *no credibility*, *little credibility*, *average credibility*, *considerable credibility*, or *exceptional credibility*. These results are recorded in table 7.10.

**Table 7.10: Percentage analysis of the responses to the credibility of advice supplied by various parties**

	None	Little	Average	Considerable	Exceptional
<b>School teachers and headmasters</b>	4.88	9.99	28.89	40.07	16.17
<b>Parents</b>	2.03	6.94	21.89	36.72	32.42
<b>Extended family (i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.)</b>	12.76	22.50	36.46	20.34	7.94
<b>Friends and Siblings (brothers and sisters)</b>	6.29	12.33	28.66	39.06	13.66
<b>Journalists (i.e. the media)</b>	15.07	18.54	32.42	25.00	8.97

The mean rating, standard deviation, and respective rank of each of the parties are recorded in table 7.11 on the following page.

**Table 7.11: Mean ratings, standard deviation and respective rank for the various parties**

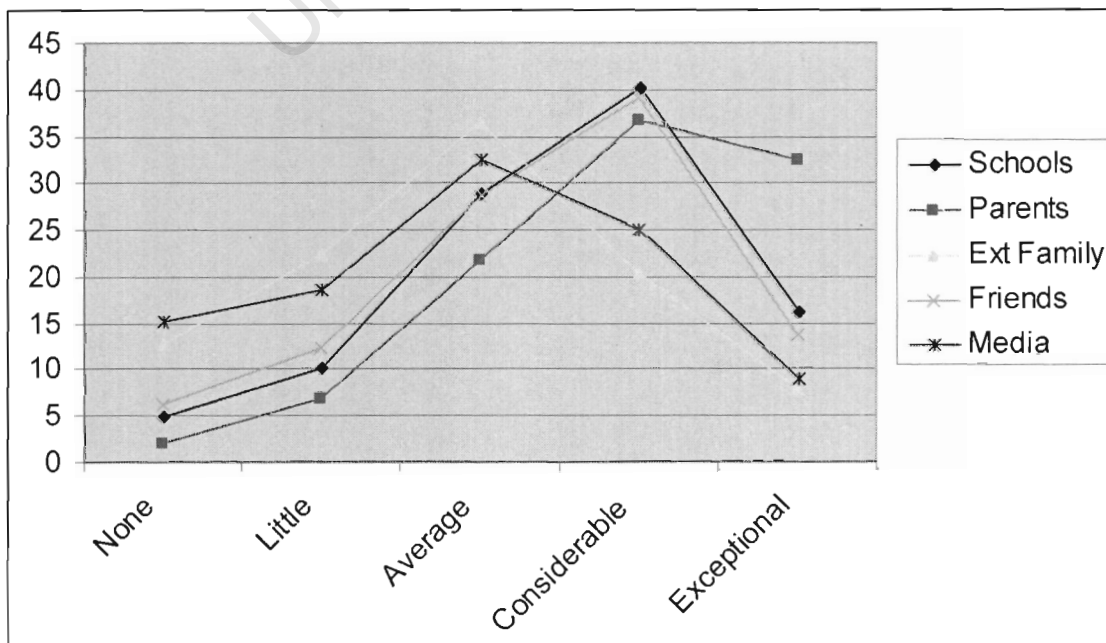
Influencers	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation	Rank
School Teachers and Headmasters	3.53	1.03	2
Parents	3.91	1.00	1
Extended family	2.88	1.15	5
Friends and Siblings	3.42	1.07	3
Journalists (the media)	2.94	1.18	4

Based on this data, the most credible source of information is deemed to originate from the scholar's parents. Thereafter advice is valued from school teachers and headmasters; friends and siblings; the media; and the scholar's extended family, respectively.

However, it should also be noted that these mean ratings fell within a narrow range – the credibility of advice supplied by the most credible party is deemed to be “very considerable”, yet the advice from the least credible party is deemed to be “better than average”. For this reason, it may be inaccurate to say that any of the parties listed above is discarded due to their possessing below average credibility, and likewise that any party is perceived to offer advice beyond compare.

Figure 7.5, constructed from the data in table 7.10, reveals the existence of three distinct groupings. The first grouping consists of school teachers/headmasters and friends/siblings, which elicited closely matching profiles. The second grouping consists of extended family and the media, which too elicited similar profiles. The third grouping consists exclusively of parents, and appears to exist without close proximity to another profile.

**Figure 7.5: Graph illustrating trends identified from the data in table 7.10**



## 7.5.2 ESTABLISHING POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATORY VARIABLES

Four variables – *gender*, *ethnic group*, *faculty* and *matric aggregate* – were analysed to determine whether each affected the credibility ratings of sources of tertiary education advice. The p-values from the ANOVA tests are recorded in table 7.12. A comprehensive breakdown of the individual ANOVA tests (including hypotheses, statistics tables, and graphical outputs) may be found in Appendix III (pages 197-208).

**Table 7.12: P-values for possible discriminatory variables**

<b>Discriminatory variable</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>p = .021</b>
<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>p = .024</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	p = .170
<b>Matric Aggregate</b>	p = .238

It was found, at the 5% significance threshold (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ ), that *gender* and *ethnic group* have an influence over the credibility ratings of sources of tertiary education advice.

In terms of gender, female respondents consistently rated the credibility of advice on offer to be higher than that rated by their male counterparts. This may be substantiated by consulting graphs III.26, III.27, III.28, III.29 and III.30 in Appendix III. Females may therefore be deemed to be more trusting, and willing to learn from the experiences of others, in this respect.

In terms of ethnic groups, the difference in ratings focuses on respondents' perceptions of school teachers and headmasters. With respect to the credibility of tertiary education advice provided by this cohort of advisors, school teachers and headmasters were rated as the primary authority by coloured respondents, the second authority by black and Indian/Asian/other respondents, and the third authority by white respondents. Other parties were rated very similarly across the board. This may be further substantiated by consulting graphs III.21, III.22, III.23, III.24 and III.25 in Appendix III.

It therefore appears that scholars of colour (i.e. non-white individuals) are more trusting of, and subsequently influenced by, academic figureheads in society.

The following section now attempts to explore two key parameters of applications-driven behaviour, as indicated by questionnaire respondents.

## 7.6 GENERAL APPLICATIONS BEHAVIOUR

This section serves to investigate the number of institutions to which scholars apply, as well as whether or not scholars have a strong preference of institution.

### 7.6.1 THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS TO WHICH SCHOLARS APPLY

The questionnaire included a question (namely, question 2) requesting that respondents indicate the number of institutions to which they had submitted an application.

#### 7.6.1.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

Table 7.13 reflects the responses to the aforementioned question.

**Table 7.13: Number of tertiary institutions to which respondents applied**

	Count	Percent
One	429	48.48
Two	243	27.46
Three	129	14.58
Four	35	3.96
Five	18	2.03
Six or more	31	3.50
Total	885	100%

Here, one out of two respondents applied to a single institution, whilst one out of four respondents applied to two institutions. Although the limited sample prevents this finding being extrapolated to the entire public higher education market, it is nonetheless significant that over three quarters of the respondents applied to two or fewer institutions. It may therefore be concluded that at the time of application, the majority of scholars have limited their evoked set to less than three institutions. Under 10% of the sample indicated that they applied to four or more institutions.

#### 7.6.1.2 ESTABLISHING POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATORY VARIABLES

Four variables – *gender*, *ethnic group*, *faculty* and *matric aggregate* – were analysed to determine whether each had an influence over the number of institutions to which the student applied. The p-values from the ANOVA tests are recorded in table 7.14 on the following page. A comprehensive

breakdown of the individual ANOVA tests (including hypotheses, statistics tables, and graphical outputs) may be found in Appendix III (pages 189-192).

**Table 7.14: P-values for possible discriminatory variables**

<b>Discriminatory variable</b>	<b>P-value</b>
Gender	$p = .083$
Ethnic Group	<b><math>p = .000</math></b>
Faculty	$p = .567$
Matric Aggregate	<b><math>p = .002</math></b>

It was found, even at the 1% significance threshold (i.e.  $p \leq 0.01$ ), that *ethnic group* and *matric aggregate* have an influence over the number of institutions to which respondents applied. Tables 7.15 and 7.16 reflect the breakdown of this finding.

**Table 7.15: Number of institutions to which respondents applied – segmented by ethnic group**

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
White	1.61	1.00
Coloured	1.69	0.93
Black	2.38	1.33
Indian/Asian/other	2.45	1.49

Table 7.15 reveals that black and Indian/Asian/other respondents applied to considerably more institutions than coloured and white respondents. This appears to indicate that previously and currently disadvantaged scholars attempt to maximise their chances of being admitted to an institution by applying to significantly more institutions than their privileged counterparts.

**Table 7.16: Number of institutions to which respondents applied – segmented by matric aggregate**

<b>Matric Aggregate</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
A aggregate	1.79	1.18
B aggregate	1.96	1.18
C aggregate	2.03	1.19
D aggregate	2.53	1.75
E aggregate	2.10	1.73

As expected, the more academically gifted respondents applied to fewer institutions, and vice-versa. However, the mean difference in the number of institutions between an A-aggregate respondent and a D-aggregate respondent was calculated to be 0.74. It may therefore be concluded that, in practice,



even weak scholars only apply to a single institution more than the strongest scholars. This suggests that in most cases, the evoked set of institutions is indeed a limited one.

## 7.6.2 AN INDICATION OF WHETHER SCHOLARS HAVE A STRONG PREFERENCE OF INSTITUTION

The questionnaire included a question (namely, question 3) requesting that respondents indicate whether or not they had a strong preference of institution during their decision process.

### 7.6.2.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

Table 7.17 reflects the responses to the aforementioned question.

**Table 7.17: Percentage analysis of whether respondents held a strong preference of institution**

	Count	Percent
Yes	753	86.55
No	117	13.45
Total	870	100%

The statistics in table 7.17 reveal that the vast majority of respondents (87%) had a strong preference of institution. Although not necessarily representative of all scholars, this appears to be a remarkable finding as it indicates the significant extent to which loyalty, or potential loyalty, exists.

### 7.6.2.2 ESTABLISHING POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATORY VARIABLES

Four variables – *gender*, *ethnic group*, *faculty* and *matric aggregate* – were analysed to determine whether each had an influence over the scholar having a strong preference of institution or not. The p-values from the ANOVA tests are recorded in table 7.18. A comprehensive breakdown of the individual ANOVA tests (including hypotheses, statistics tables, and graphical outputs) may be found in Appendix III (pages 193-196).

**Table 7.18: P-values for possible discriminatory variables**

Discriminatory variable	P-value
Gender	p = .069
Ethnic Group	p = .762
Faculty	p = .268
Matric Aggregate	p = .059

It was found, at the 5% significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ ), that neither *gender*, *ethnic group*, *faculty*, nor *matric aggregate* has an influence over whether or not the respondents had a strong preference of institution.

Owing to the respondents' limited affiliation with a relatively small number of tertiary education institutions, this suggests that these individuals may be receptive to relationship formation. The next section completes the chapter by establishing more specific parameters as to the extent that relationship marketing may be feasible as a tool for student recruitment success.

## 7.7 THE MERITS OF ESTABLISHING PRE-APPLICATION RELATIONSHIPS WITH PROSPECTS

### 7.7.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

Question 8 in the questionnaire asked respondents to rate the benefits they deemed most valuable in terms of having a pre-application relationship with selected tertiary education institutions. The intention was to establish where prospective students sought benefits, in order for institutions to tailor refinements to their student recruitment programmes. The results are displayed, unclassified (i.e. including all respondents), as well as segmented according to ethnic group, in table 7.19.

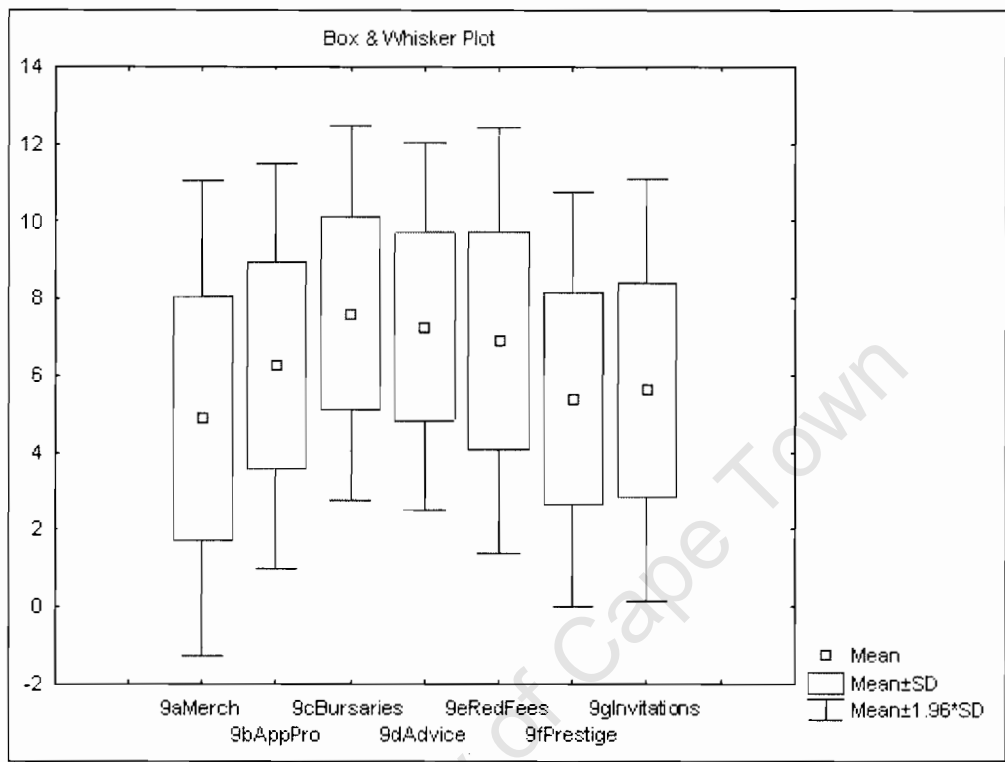
**Table 7.19: Factors influencing scholars to participate in pre-application relationships**

	<b>All</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>Indian/ Asian/ Other</b>
<b>Merchandise</b>	4.89 <b>(7)</b> <i>(3.15)</i>	5.35 <b>(6)</b> <i>(3.51)</i>	4.26 <b>(7)</b> <i>(2.62)</i>	4.54 <b>(7)</b> <i>(2.97)</i>	4.84 <b>(6)</b> <i>(2.63)</i>
<b>Expedited application process</b>	6.26 <b>(4)</b> <i>(2.68)</i>	5.70 <b>(5)</b> <i>(2.83)</i>	6.86 <b>(3)</b> <i>(2.40)</i>	5.77 <b>(4)</b> <i>(2.47)</i>	7.26 <b>(4)</b> <i>(2.58)</i>
<b>Financial Aid available</b>	7.61 <b>(1)</b> <i>(2.49)</i>	7.71 <b>(1)</b> <i>(2.70)</i>	7.23 <b>(2)</b> <i>(2.29)</i>	8.39 <b>(1)</b> <i>(2.12)</i>	7.95 <b>(3)</b> <i>(1.84)</i>
<b>Curriculum Advice</b>	7.27 <b>(2)</b> <i>(2.44)</i>	7.05 <b>(2)</b> <i>(2.66)</i>	7.38 <b>(1)</b> <i>(2.23)</i>	7.54 <b>(2)</b> <i>(2.30)</i>	8.26 <b>(1)</b> <i>(1.49)</i>
<b>Reduced application fees</b>	6.90 <b>(3)</b> <i>(2.82)</i>	6.85 <b>(3)</b> <i>(3.14)</i>	6.75 <b>(4)</b> <i>(2.52)</i>	6.77 <b>(3)</b> <i>(2.90)</i>	8.00 <b>(2)</b> <i>(2.11)</i>
<b>Prestige</b>	5.40 <b>(6)</b> <i>(2.74)</i>	5.24 <b>(7)</b> <i>(2.89)</i>	5.58 <b>(5)</b> <i>(2.59)</i>	5.20 <b>(6)</b> <i>(2.66)</i>	6.26 <b>(5)</b> <i>(2.81)</i>
<b>Invitations to social events</b>	5.62 <b>(5)</b> <i>(2.79)</i>	5.96 <b>(4)</b> <i>(3.08)</i>	5.35 <b>(6)</b> <i>(2.29)</i>	5.64 <b>(5)</b> <i>(2.58)</i>	4.79 <b>(7)</b> <i>(3.07)</i>

*The mean rating is shown (1=completely unimportant, 10=absolutely critical), with its respective ranking in bolded parenthesis and the standard deviation in italicized parenthesis.*

Figure 7.6 illustrates the data displayed in the first column (i.e. across all ethnic groups) of table 7.19 in Box and Whisker plot format.

**Figure 7.6: Box and Whisker Plot of the factors influencing scholars to participate in pre-application relationships**



Coding: Merch = Merchandise; AppPro = Expedited application process; Bursaries = Financial Aid; Advice = Curriculum Advice; RedFees = Reduced Application Fees; Prestige = Prestige; Invitations = Invitations to Social Events

The availability of *financial aid* was calculated to be the most significant factor in a respondent’s desire to participate in such a relationship. This factor has the second lowest standard deviation, suggesting a high level of uniformity across the sample.

*Curriculum advice* was calculated to be the second most important factor. Furthermore, this factor has the lowest standard deviation, suggesting a similarly high level of uniformity across the sample.

*Reduced application fees* was positioned third, an *expedited application process* fourth, *invitations to social events* fifth, *prestige* sixth, and receiving complimentary *merchandise* seventh.

It therefore appears that scholars are looking for real value and are less concerned with ‘feel good’ offerings such as invitations to social events, the prestige of being associated with a prestigious

institution, and receiving free merchandise. The general consensus seems to be that scholars want serious benefits which will have a significant impact on their further education. In this respect, it may be concluded that ‘window dressing’ such relationship programmes will actually achieve relatively little.

The questionnaire also probed respondents (through question 9) to discover how many institutions they were willing to have a relationship with prior to the opening of the applications window. Table 7.20 exhibits the results obtained.

**Table 7.20: The number of institutions with which respondents wished to have a pre-application relationship**

	Count	Cumulative Count	Percentage
None	66	66	8.04
One	127	193	15.47
Two	266	459	32.40
Three	123	582	14.98
Four	21	603	2.56
The more the better	218	821	26.55
Total	821	821	100 %

The mean value was recorded as 2.68 (with a standard deviation of 1.63), meaning that the average scholar is likely to want a relationship with two to three institutions.

However, table 7.20 also reveals that the number count peaks initially at two institutions, drops, and then peaks again at the maximum number of institutions. This anomaly in the data may be attributed to a cohort of respondents envisaging exercising greed and therefore abusing this system to acquire maximum benefit. These individuals may therefore be classified as ‘opportunity seekers’, whilst the former group is likely to be more representative of the more conservative (or serious) student.

### 7.7.2 ESTABLISHING POSSIBLE DISCRIMINATORY VARIABLES

Four variables – *gender*, *ethnic group*, *faculty* and *matric aggregate* – were analysed to determine whether each had an effect on the number of institutions with which scholars wanted a pre-application relationship. The p-values from the ANOVA tests are recorded in table 7.21 on the following page. A comprehensive breakdown of the individual ANOVA tests (including hypotheses, statistics tables, and graphical outputs) may be found in Appendix III (pages 214-217).

**Table 7.21: P-values for possible discriminatory variables**

<b>Discriminatory variable</b>	<b>P-value</b>
Gender	p = .235
Ethnic Group	<b>p = .004</b>
Faculty	p = .858
Matric Aggregate	p = .301

It was found, at the 5% significance threshold (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ ), that only *ethnic group* has an influence over the number of institutions with which respondents wanted a pre-application relationship.

Table 7.22 provides a breakdown to reveal the mean and standard deviation statistics across the different ethnic groups.

**Table 7.22: Mean and standard deviations statistics across the different ethnic groups**

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
White	2.47	1.60
Black	2.87	1.57
Coloured	2.80	1.70
Indian/Asian/Other	2.92	1.68

This data suggests the view that black, coloured, and Indian/Asian/other scholars are likely to want a relationship with 2.8 to 2.9 institutions, whereas white students are likely to want a relationship with 2.5 institutions. This trend would support the notion that those scholars from previously and currently disadvantaged backgrounds want a relationship with relatively more institutions. This may be due to a number of reasons, two of which are proposed. Firstly, scholars of colour, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, may merely want to maximise their chances of being admitted into higher education. Secondly, scholars of colour may, out of necessity, be less selective, thereby ignoring the previous ‘historically white’ institution versus ‘historically black’ institution divide.

### **7.7.3 A MULTIVARIATE STATISTICAL PERSPECTIVE**

For the same reasons outlined in section 7.4.2, a factor analysis exercise was performed on the data containing the considerations influencing a student to adopt a pre-application relationship with one or more tertiary education institutions.

Table 7.23 displays the eigenvalues for the factor analysis model generated. An interpretation of the model is then included on page 132.

**Table 7.23: Eigenvalues for the generated factor analysis model**

<b>Eigenvalues</b> <b>Extraction: Principal components</b>				
	<b>Eigenvalue</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Cumulative Eigenvalue</b>	<b>Cumulative Percentage</b>
<b>Factor 1</b>	2.386794	34.09706	2.386794	34.09706
<b>Factor 2</b>	1.244133	17.77333	3.630927	51.87039

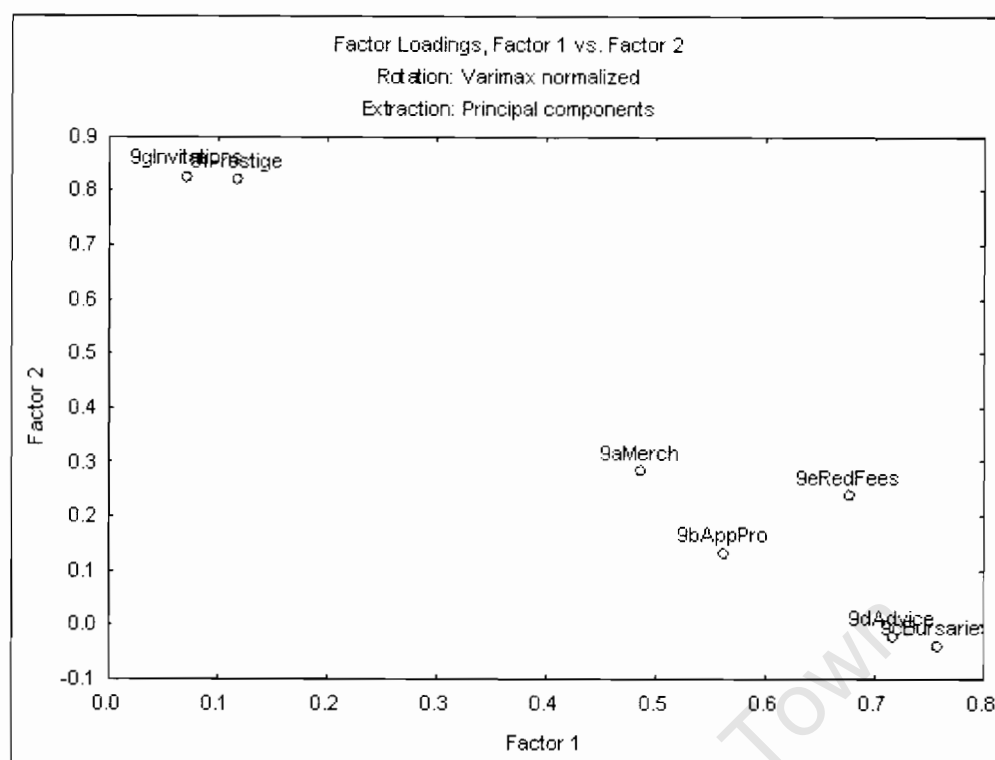
It is therefore evident that the model explains 51.87% of the variance in the data, which is acceptable yet not absolutely conclusive in terms of accuracy. The model should therefore be applied with caution.

The factor loadings, indicating the extent to which each consideration is aligned with each factor, are detailed in table 7.24. Figure 7.7, on the following page, graphically represents the factor loadings across factor 1 and 2.

**Table 7.24: Factor loadings in the generated factor analysis model**

<b>Factor Loadings (Varimax normalized)</b> <b>Extraction: Principal components (Marked loadings are &gt;.650000)</b>		
	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>
<b>Obtaining free merchandise</b>	0.486756	0.281940
<b>Expedited application process</b>	0.562938	0.131249
<b>Availability of special bursaries and/or scholarships</b>	<b>0.758761</b>	-0.040071
<b>Special curriculum advice</b>	<b>0.717958</b>	-0.022577
<b>Reduced application fees</b>	<b>0.677345</b>	0.236804
<b>Prestige of being 'head hunted'</b>	0.118320	<b>0.820109</b>
<b>Invitations to social events</b>	0.072186	<b>0.824876</b>
<b>Explained Variation</b>	2.123019	1.507908
<b>Proportion of the total</b>	0.303288	0.215415

**Figure 7.7: Factor 1 mapped against Factor 2**



Coding: Merch = Merchandise; AppPro = Expedited application process; Bursaries = Financial Aid; Advice = Curriculum Advice; RedFees = Reduced Application Fees; Prestige = Prestige; Invitations = Invitations to Social Events

The model identifies two constructs from the seven variables (considerations) given as possible influences.

Factor one consists of the considerations *availability of special bursaries and/or scholarships; special curriculum advice and reduced application fees*. This construct appears to cover the critical (i.e. core) needs of the student. That is, those issues relating to the higher education decision and application processes. It would appear that this construct focuses exclusively on an academic dimension.

Factor one is the more powerful of the two factors as it, exclusively, explains 34.1% of the variance in the data – almost double that of the variance explained by factor two.

Factor two consists of the considerations *prestige of being 'head hunted' as well as invitations to social events*. This construct appears to focus on a social dimension and largely covers the emotional benefits (e.g. feelings of acceptance, belonging, pride, etc.) in being associated with a prestigious institution. These two influences may be thought of as the 'extras' or 'nice to haves'. Factor two, however, only explains 17.8% of the variance in the data.

In summation, this factor analysis model appears somewhat weak statistically, yet may still hold value in practice. However, it does serve to suggest a clear divide between the seemingly rational (i.e. academic) needs and the seemingly emotional (i.e. social) needs of prospective students.

## **7.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The findings within this chapter are plentiful. These are briefly summarised below.

The questionnaire respondents appear to be generally satisfied with the applications process. However, they cited suggestions that the process be expedited and that up-to-date information concerning their application status and the institutions' offerings be made more accessible, particularly through electronic media.

Respondents gave significant thought to their course and place of study from grade 10 onwards, with this consideration peaking in grade 12. With respect to financing their studies, this issue appears to have been largely ignored until grade 12. In terms of applications behaviour, just under half of all respondents applied to a single institution, and just over a quarter applied to two institutions. The remainder applied to three or more institutions. It was found that individuals from previously and currently disadvantaged backgrounds submitted applications to relatively more institutions.

According to the sample, the most credible source of information is deemed to originate from the scholar's parents. Thereafter advice appears to be valued from school teachers and headmasters, friends and siblings, the media, and the scholar's extended family, respectively. However, the differing levels of credibility were judged to be somewhat negligible.

The *reputation of the institution* was found to be the most important factor in the decision of a place of further study. *Geographic location* seems to be considered second most important, *campus safety* third, *tuition fees* fourth, *financial aid offered* fifth, *ease with which accepted* sixth, *social programmes offered* seventh, and *recommendations from friends/family* eighth.

The respondents appeared to react favourably toward the prospect of a pre-application relationship with a select number of institutions, with under 10% of the sample reporting no interest in this.



Furthermore, the availability of *financial aid* was calculated to be the most significant factor in terms of desire to participate in a pre-application relationship with an institution. *Curriculum advice* was calculated to be second most important, *reduced application fees* third, *an expedited application process* fourth, *invitations to social events* fifth, *prestige* sixth, and *receiving merchandise* seventh.

The remaining section of this dissertation reviews the hypotheses formulated in the previous chapter. Subsequently, based on the material discussed throughout the dissertation, relevant conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

University of Cape Town

# **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 8.1 CONCLUSIONS

The literature review highlighted a number of salient points. Competitive forces in the higher education sector were found to include changes in government funding methods, globalisation of higher education bringing new competitors into the local market, and applications from new students at some well established institutions actually declining (Tagwireyi, 2000). Furthermore, it would appear that competition, both domestically and abroad, has intensified in the tertiary education sector, both to acquire new students and to obtain the necessary funding (Daughdrill, 1994; Law, 2002; Liu, 1998; Zemsky *et al*, 2001). The future of many institutions is therefore thought to be unknown – there is little certainty that public institutions will continue to be supported by the government, or even their local communities. Thus, it seems that loyalty toward these institutions is only as strong as the benefit they can provide their stakeholders. This necessitates an elimination of complacency and a firm adoption of the competitive challenge.

The literature review also explored a number of potential remedies to address this dilemma. It may be argued that higher education institutions face many of the same intense competitive forces that make relationship marketing an attractive strategy for many 'for-profit' firms (Arnett *et al*, 2003a). It is suggested that the heightened level of closeness, interaction, trust and loyalty brought about by relationship marketing may therefore be suitably applied in a student recruitment context. Relationship marketing advocates a lifetime view of the customer (Christopher *et al*, 1991; Peck *et al*, 1999; etc). This is most certainly applicable to the higher education sector, where institutions are beginning to see the student as a customer for life (Kotler and Fox, 1995). In this respect, institutions are pursuing a ladder approach that first enters into a relationship with an individual as a prospective student and thereafter continues the relationship throughout the remainder of his/her lifespan. The final stage of this cycle is the student as an alumnus and, ideally, a donor of funds to the institution (BearingPoint, 2003; Oblinger, 2003). In order to facilitate this process, brand management, youth marketing and *Information and Communications Technology* were considered for the benefits that each may be able to lend to such an approach.

The qualitative research found that relationships were deemed by higher education institutions to be pivotal in terms of their respective student recruitment programmes. Specifically, three relationships were seen as key ingredients in the conventional student recruitment process, namely those between higher education institutions, feeder schools, and scholars and their parents. These relationships formed a triangle, with the relationship between the school and its scholars comprising the strongest link, and the relationship between the tertiary education institution and scholars (i.e. prospective

students) comprising the weakest link. It may therefore be concluded that institutions would be wise to leverage the strength of the relationship between a school and its scholars (and their parents) in their future marketing efforts.

### **8.1.1 QUALITY OF SERVICE RENDERED THROUGHOUT THE APPLICATIONS PROCESS**

In terms of the efficiency of the applications process, approximately 80% of respondents thought this process to be “fair” or “good”. Only 11% of respondents considered it to be either “poor” or “very poor”. It may therefore be concluded that scholars are generally satisfied with admissions systems.

However, a number of suggestions as to how this process could be improved were captured from the completed questionnaires. These included ensuring that admissions staff are comprehensively trained and more easily accessible, attaining greater collaboration with other student facilities such as financial aid and student housing, reducing or eliminating application fees, redesigning application forms so as to ensure that these are as user-friendly as possible, and providing extensive curriculum advice when required.

A strong technological orientation was revealed in terms of the manner in which respondents wished to interact with institutions. In this respect, it appears that prospective students exhibit a preference to liaise with institutions, as well as to obtain up-to-date information about the educational services on offer, via the Internet. Likewise, these individuals desire the ability to submit, and access the status of, their applications in real-time through the Internet. For this reason, the hypothesis H<sup>5</sup> “*scholars consider electronic channels to be a favourable means of interacting with tertiary education institutions during the applications period*” should be accepted.

Yet, somewhat surprisingly, the impression gleaned from the questionnaire respondents suggests that scholars are largely satisfied with the process, whilst the view expressed by the institutions suggests that prospective students’ expectations are failing to be met. One possible reason for this apparent discrepancy may be a tolerance, as displayed by scholars, of the enormous undertaking of the task (i.e. the admissions process) performed by the institution.

### **8.1.2 PERIOD OF AWARENESS AND CONSIDERATION OF STUDY OPTIONS**

Institutions claim that scholars intending to pursue higher education studies first give serious consideration to their intended diploma/degree toward the end of grade 9 when they are forced to select the subjects with which they desire to write their senior certificate examinations. It is thought that this period marks the selection of the intended broad area of tertiary studies (e.g. Commerce, Engineering, etc). Furthermore, institutions feel that scholars tentatively choose their institution of study, as well as the means of financing their studies, in grade 11. It is viewed that this is the first point at which scholars feel under significant pressure to consider their tertiary studies.

The data analysis reveals a slightly different scenario. It would appear that scholars give significant thought to their course and place of study from grade 10 onwards, and that this consideration peaks in grade 12. Based on the sample, the patterns for considering the course and place of study are very similar. Approximately 15% of the respondents gave attention to these issues in grade 10, 27% in grade 11, and 40% in grade 12. The data also reveals that in terms of financing further education, this appears to be largely ignored until grade 12 (the year wherein 60% of the respondents seriously considered this issue for the first time). Approximately a quarter of the sample gave consideration to this issue one year earlier (i.e. in grade 11).

The two views – that expressed by the institutions themselves and that presented by the questionnaire data analysis – appear to coincide to an extent. However, the scenario presented by the student survey suggests that tertiary education planning, particularly the financing of studies, is left somewhat later than expected by the institutions. In fact, it would appear that for many prospective students, this is left on the backburner until deadlines become unavoidable.

### **8.1.3 CREDIBILITY OF ADVICE OFFERED TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS**

There are a number of parties that offer tertiary education advice to prospective students – some via personal channels and others via mass orientated channels.

Based on the sample, the most credible source of information is deemed to originate from the scholar's parents ( $\mu=3.91$ ). Thereafter advice appears to be valued from school teachers and headmasters ( $\mu=3.53$ ), friends and siblings ( $\mu=3.42$ ), the media ( $\mu=2.94$ ), and the scholar's extended family ( $\mu=2.88$ ), respectively. However, data analysis reveals that the mean ratings fell

within a narrow range – the credibility of advice supplied by the most credible party was found to be “very considerable”, yet the advice from the least credible party was found to be “better than average”. For this reason, bearing in mind this skewed distribution of responses, it may be inaccurate to say that any party is discarded due to poorly perceived credibility. Yet, similarly, it seems that no party is thought to offer exceptional advice beyond question.

Furthermore, three distinct cohorts were found to exist. Therein, credibility profiles match to a very close degree. The first cohort consists exclusively of the prospective student’s parents, the second cohort consists of school teachers/headmasters and friends/siblings, and the third cohort consists of the scholar’s extended family and the media. This model may therefore be used to provide effective segmentation with the cohorts offering descending orders of credibility, respectively.

Based on the above, the hypothesis H<sup>3</sup> “*scholars place greatest credibility on the advice received from their parents, over and above the advice being disseminated from other parties, when making higher education study decisions*” should be accepted.

#### **8.1.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF INSTITUTION**

Based on the sample, the *reputation of the institution* ( $\mu=8.55$ ) was found to be the most important factor in the scholar’s decision of a place of further study. *Geographic location* ( $\mu=7.01$ ) is considered to be second most important, *campus safety* ( $\mu=6.81$ ) third, *tuition fees* ( $\mu=6.12$ ) fourth, *financial aid offered* ( $\mu=6.00$ ) fifth, *ease with which accepted* ( $\mu=5.97$ ) sixth, *social programmes offered* (5.26) seventh, and *recommendations from friends/family* ( $\mu=4.77$ ) eighth. These findings are largely consistent with those proposed by Cosser (2002) in his HSRC study.

Thus, the evidence confirms that hypothesis H<sup>4</sup> “*the reputation of the institution (i.e. the institutional brand) is the most prominent factor for scholars when choosing a place of higher education study*” should be accepted.

Furthermore, ratings appear to be largely consistent across ethnic groups. However, whilst white respondents rated financial aid as the least important discriminating factor, this was rated by coloured respondents to be the second most important factor and by black respondents to be the third most important factor. This therefore points to financial aid as a potential discriminatory variable in terms of individuals from previously and currently disadvantaged communities. This issue is further elaborated on in the discussion in section 8.1.7.

### **8.1.5 BEHAVIOUR EXHIBITED BY APPLICANTS**

Just under half (49%) of the respondents applied to a single institution, and just over a quarter (28%) applied to two institutions. Approximately 15% applied to three institutions. Very few individuals applied to four or more institutions. These statistics coincide with the finding that 87 % of those individuals surveyed indicated that they had a strong preference of institution. It may therefore be argued that scholars are particularly selective about the institution they wish to attend and, subsequent to this decision, become committed to achieving this objective. It is evident that scholars exhibit behaviour which indicates that they are either loyal, or potentially loyal, to their preferred institution.

It is interesting to note that coloured and white respondents applied, on average, to 1.69 and 1.61 institutions, respectively. However, black and Indian/Asian/other respondents applied, on average, to 2.38 and 2.45 institutions, respectively. This notable difference may be attributed to the latter category's disadvantaged background and the fact that less affluent students may have doubts about affording the services of prestigious (and therefore relatively more expensive) higher education institutions, thereby necessitating the need to apply to a wider range of institutions. Alternatively, some of the individuals in the latter categories may be foreign students applying to a large number of institutions with the aim of maximizing their chance of studying at a South African institution.

### **8.1.6 THE MERITS OF A PRE-APPLICATION RELATIONSHIP**

A mere 8% of questionnaire respondents reported that they did not wish to have a relationship with any institution prior to the applications period. However, 15% of respondents reported that they wished to be closely associated with a single institution, 32% with two institutions, 15% with three institutions and 3% with four institutions. Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) indicated that they wanted a close relationship with five or more institutions.

These statistics reveal that the number count peaks initially at two institutions, drops, and then peaks again at the maximum number of institutions. However, it may be safely concluded that the cohort of scholars choosing the latter option are effectively 'opportunity seekers' primarily pursuing personal benefits, without the intention to contribute any form of loyalty. Likewise, it may be interpreted that the former cohort is indicative of the more conservative (or serious) student. Nonetheless, it appears that enthusiasm toward pre-application relationships certainly exists.

Pairing the results of conclusion 8.1.2 and results documented directly above, the hypothesis H<sup>1</sup> “*scholars in their final years of high school are enthusiastic about entering into a pre-application relationship with a limited number of tertiary education institutions*” should be accepted.

Based on the sample, the availability of *financial aid* ( $\mu=7.61$ ) was found to be the most important reason to have a pre-application relationship with an institution. *Curriculum advice* ( $\mu=7.27$ ) is deemed to be the second most important reason, *reduced application fees* ( $\mu=6.90$ ) third, *an expedited application process* ( $\mu=6.26$ ) fourth, *invitations to social events* ( $\mu=5.62$ ) fifth, *prestige* ( $\mu=5.40$ ) sixth, and *receiving merchandise* ( $\mu=4.89$ ) seventh.

It therefore appears that scholars are looking for real value and are less concerned with ‘feel good’ offerings such as invitations to social events, the prestige of being affiliated with a prestigious institution, and receiving free merchandise. The general consensus seems to be that scholars want serious benefits which will have a significant impact on the advancement of their further education and career. The factor analysis model underscored this by confirming a clear divide separating economic from social benefits. In this respect, it may be concluded that ‘window dressing’ (i.e. a lack of substance to the programme) actually achieves relatively little.

Thus, despite the assertion that scholars may prefer ‘feel good’ (i.e. social) factors, the findings of this study would suggest otherwise. Hence, the hypothesis H<sup>2</sup> “*scholars are likely to place greater emphasis on social needs rather than academic and economic needs whilst maintaining a pre-application relationship with tertiary institutions*” should be rejected.

### **8.1.7 EFFECTIVE DISCRIMINATORY VARIABLES**

Empirical evidence suggests that the dominance of two discriminatory variables – the prospective student’s ethnic group and his/her financial situation.

Firstly, ethnic group was found to be the ultimate such variable, and the most effective in discriminating between cohorts of prospective students. In most ANOVA analyses, ethnic group was highlighted as being a strong discriminator. This finding points to the realization that racial lines should not be completely discarded in terms of student recruitment. Those individuals from previously and currently disadvantaged communities appear to exhibit specific needs and characteristics, which should be addressed accordingly. Tailoring recruitment efforts to deliver value to this segment may result in significant gains being accrued to those institutions.



Secondly, the motivation of finances appears to be a strong incentive. However, this may not only be applicable in the case of the 'have nots'. Although speculative in nature, it may be argued that the lure of scholarships, bursaries and other financial aid could actually be the ultimate factor in the choice of a place of further study. Initially, this may seem somewhat counterintuitive as this factor was rated neither the first nor the second most important issue in the institution selection process.

Nonetheless, money may indeed possess more persuasion power than directly reported. For instance, it may be the case that reputation and geographic location are used to determine an evoked set of institutions, but that financial considerations act as the final decider on where the scholar chooses to enrol. In this respect, financial matters should not be underrated despite the seemingly subordinate status. However, it is acknowledged that this assertion requires further research.

## **8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **8.2.1 SMALL SCALE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STUDENT RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES SHOULD BE LAUNCHED AS PILOT PROGRAMMES**

Inherent differences in the structures and cultures of institutions suggest that a CRM student recruitment programme does not lend itself to a 'one size fits all' philosophy. Before committing substantial resources to a comprehensive programme of this sort, the institution would be advised to launch a pilot programme for testing purposes. The effectiveness and efficiency of this limited trial should be closely monitored, and then thoroughly assessed, before a decision is made whether to launch or abandon a full scale programme. This approach also means that unforeseen difficulties encountered may be corrected and the programme optimized before final launch. This will also serve the purpose of fulfilling skills training and allowing the personnel involved to gain valuable experience. To this end, an institution may wish to launch the programme within a single faculty, or alternatively within a selection of departments, before considering extending it throughout the entire institution.

### **8.2.2 TRADITIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT TECHNIQUES MAY BE SUPPLEMENTED WITH A CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT APPROACH, BUT SHOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE REPLACED BY SUCH**

It is envisaged that mass marketing practices will continue to play a pivotal role in student recruitment for the foreseeable future. However, it is also likely that CRM programmes will play a niche role in the near future and a considerably more prominent role over the medium to long term. For this reason, it may be highly opportunistic to consider implementing a CRM programme as an immediate and direct replacement of traditional recruitment practices.

Due to the high management costs involved (as suggested by Newell, 2003), and without very significant budgetary increases, it is almost impossible to envisage a feasible CRM approach having the same widespread effect as that of a traditional (i.e. mass marketing orientated) student recruitment campaign. Therefore, by adopting an exclusive CRM approach without deploying a large capital outlay, an institution risks losing a significant quantity of the demand created and, as a result, applications received. Owing to the fact that many institutions have found success in generating quality of entering undergraduate students through the sheer quantity of applications received, it would appear ill advisable for institutions to abruptly abandon these tried-and-trusted practices. Rather, it seems plausible for institutions to have a dual mechanism whereby the strengths of both approaches are utilized for different aspects of the student recruitment function. Thus, it is suggested that a CRM approach may form an appropriate basis for recruiting students at the upper end of the target market (i.e. those truly deserving of being 'head hunted'), whilst a conventional approach may best suited to capturing those at the lower and middle ends of the target market.

### **8.2.3 STUDENT RECRUITERS NEED TO KEEP ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THEIR TARGET MARKET**

It would appear that institutions need to become more proactive in terms of researching their target market – not only in terms of academic attributes, but also in terms of communication methods, social preferences, lifestyle, etc. As reported by the institutions themselves, non-academic issues have historically been given low priority and are hence under-researched.

Several studies (e.g. Geraci *et al*, 2000; UISM, 2002; UISM, 2003b) report that the youth market is an extremely dynamic one. Therefore, the cost of failing to continuously monitor this market – through primary and/or secondary research – may result in the institution becoming rapidly out of

synch with the target market. This may be a critical failure, as an increase in cognitive distance between the institution and prospective student is likely to result in a communications and understanding gap that could potentially threaten to undermine successful interactions between the two parties. In the past, it appears that this has manifested itself in students' perceptions of institutions as being arrogant and unprogressive. This has, in turn, resulted in some students feeling intimidated and/or patronized by institutions, who are either unaware of their mistake or unwilling to communicate on preferential terms.

#### **8.2.4 ELECTRONIC CHANNELS SHOULD BE ADOPTED AS THE DEFACTO STANDARD IN COMMUNICATING AND TRANSACTING WITH PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS**

The literature (e.g. Foster, 2003; Kittle and Ciba, 2001) suggests that electronic communications platforms provide highly appropriate means with which to interact and transact with prospective students during the recruitment and enrollment phases.

It would appear that new communications technologies such as SMS, MMS, e-mail, and even instant messaging, possess large potential for exploitation. In particular, these electronic communications channels may be used to lower costs and provide almost immediate access to the target market. Furthermore, many of these channels have been readily adopted by the youth market and are fast becoming a favoured form of communication (UISM, 2002; UISM, 2003b).

The empirical evidence reveals that institutions have tended to rely on proven heritage systems. Despite numerous deficiencies having been highlighted in this stance, many institutions appear to be slow to adopt new technologies (e.g. online application systems). Nonetheless, the competitive scenario dictates that institutions may not actually have the luxury of choice in this respect. Feedback from applicants suggests that it is becoming imperative that these institutions abandon antiquated systems and embrace new electronic platforms if they are to achieve the objective of increasing levels of satisfaction. However, it is acknowledged that further research is necessary in this respect.

### **8.2.5 STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED, PRIORITIZED AND FIRMLY ASSESSED OVER THE LONG TERM**

This research has highlighted that the reputation or ‘brand’ of the institution is of the utmost importance in terms of student recruitment. Yet, services marketing theory promotes the notion that managing a services brand, such as a higher education brand, is an arduous task (De Chernatony and McDonald, 2003). As the challenge of managing the multiplicity effect is a difficult one, brand managers of service organizations need to provide substantial and sustained effort to ensure that a consistent message is resonated. However, whilst conventional branding theory urges a minimal amount of change to a successful brand, this does not mean that the positioning of the brand cannot be noticeably modified when necessary. Bearing testimony to this, many institutions in the United States (e.g. the Universities of Cincinnati and Maryland, as identified by Pulley, 2003) have derived benefit from repositioning themselves when awareness levels have dropped and the brand was deemed by the general public and academic community to be archaic and uninteresting. However, it is asserted that thorough research is required before serious decisions to re-brand are entertained.

Furthermore, it appears that institutions would do well to differentiate themselves from the ‘sea of sameness’. In this respect, it seems that most institutions are positioned along similar lines – academic excellence, impressive facilities, etc. Different positioning stances (e.g. a student-friendly administrative environment, value for money education, etc) may be used to gain share of mind and achieve the quest of building a distinctive brand.

Thus, relevant attention should be paid to ensuring that the brand remains both recognized and invigorated. As alluded to earlier in this dissertation, without a strong institutional brand, other marketing endeavours, especially those related to the student recruitment function, may falter.

### **8.2.6 FUTURE RECRUITMENT SUCCESS MAY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH AN EXTENDED MARKETING NETWORK**

Kotler (2004:13) advocates that competition in the future will have a strong network orientation. In this respect, “a marketing network consists of a company and its supporting stakeholders, [parties] with whom it has built mutually profitable business relationships. Increasingly, competition is not between companies, but marketing networks.”

It appears that this theory may be suitably applied in a student recruitment context. Here, institutions are coming to the realization that their future success may be achieved through an extended marketing network, as opposed to head-to-head combat with direct competitors.

Elaborating on the above, alliances and relationships are likely to take on a critical dimension. Institutions insisting on a high degree of autonomy or independence in their marketing efforts may find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. To this end, relationships with alumni, key feeder schools and other noteworthy parties are bound to increase in significance in the future as these become vital avenues for building brand equity and connecting with the target market. The ‘Student Recruitment Relationship Triangle’, discussed earlier in this dissertation, is therefore likely to become particularly important in the advent of a network marketing approach to student recruitment increasing in prominence.

### **8.2.7 FURTHER RESEARCH IS REQUIRED INTO THE REALM OF STUDENT RECRUITMENT MARKETING IN SOUTH AFRICA**

This dissertation has unearthed a number of elementary issues, many of which require further exploration. Examples of these issues include underlying perceptions, attitudes and preconceptions that drive applications behaviour; the state of co-ordination between admissions-related departments within institutions and the bearing this has on the student recruitment function; the readiness of *Information and Communications Technology* to embrace the challenge of CRM in the student recruitment environment; as well as future trends in the student recruitment arena. Furthermore, from the perspective of the institution, this dissertation has primarily focused on an investigation of a qualitative nature. A quantitative cost/benefit analysis may prove to be a more scientific and influential piece of research in advocating a relationship marketing orientation for student recruitment.

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University of Cape Town

# **APPENDIX I**

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

## QUESTIONS POSED TO HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT RECRUITMENT MARKETERS

- Who and what are the main influences on an individual's decision where to study (i.e. his/her choice of institution)?
- What mass marketing techniques are currently being used to entice individuals to study at a particular institution?
- What direct marketing and/or relationship marketing techniques are currently being used to entice individuals to study at a particular institution?
- What influence does *Information and Communications Technology* (i.e. Internet, cellular, etc.) have on the student recruitment practice? How will this facilitate recruiting attempts in the future?
- Do you use any specific Customer Relationship Management software to manage recruitment efforts and progress? If so, what specific benefits does this provide your institution?
- How have students' wants and needs, with respect to higher education, changed over the last few decades?
- Are students more demanding in terms of service quality? Is the manner in which they are treated prior to registration really significant in their final decision to join a particular institution or not?
- What is the likely future of higher education marketing with respect to student recruitment? What innovative practices lie ahead?
- In terms of supply of quality students, do you see the numbers increasing or decreasing? Why?
- How important are relationships in student recruiting – both with schools and prospective students? Please elaborate on the nature of both.
- How has the competitive landscape of student recruitment changed over the last ten to fifteen years? How do public higher education institutions perceive the competition from private institutions – is it a serious threat or a minor inconvenience?
- Has your style of communication with prospective students changed? Are these individuals treated as being more mature and independent, are they regarded as 'customers', etc?

## **APPENDIX II**

# **QUESTIONNAIRE**



# MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A STUDENT RECRUITMENT SURVEY

This survey investigates how universities and technikons in South Africa can best market themselves to prospective undergraduate students. It also investigates to what extent scholars want to be involved with these institutions during their school years so that relationship marketing can take place prior to their application.

*Please tell us a bit about yourself. Please note that the questionnaire is anonymous and all information provided will be kept strictly confidential.*

a. Gender: 

Male	Female
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b. Ethnic Group: 

Black	Coloured	White	Indian	Asian	Other
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c. Year of Birth: 19\_\_\_\_

d. Faculty: 

Commerce	Engineering	Humanities	Science	Law	Health Sciences
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e. Matric Aggregate: 

A (80% +)	B (70-79%)	C (60-69%)	D (50-59%)	E (40-49%)
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f. Household (Family) Gross Annual Income:

Under R 50 000	R 50 000 – R 100 000	R 100 001 – R 250 000	Above R 250 000	Don't Know
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*Please share your insights with us – we really value what you have to say!*

1. In which grade did you first give serious consideration to... *Please make a single cross in each column.*

	(a) your course of study (i.e. type of degree)?	(b) your place of study (i.e. the institution itself)?	(c) how to finance your studies (e.g. loan, bursary, scholarship, parents' funding, etc.)?
Before Grade 8			
Grade 8			
Grade 9			
Grade 10			
Grade 11			
Grade 12 or after			

2. How many technikons and/or universities did you apply to? 

1	2	3	4	5	6 or more
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3. Did you have one strong preference? 

YES	NO
-----	----

4. Please rate the following factors, on a scale from 1 to 10, when choosing a place of study. 1 = not at all important; 10 = absolutely critical. *Please note that each factor should be rated independently of the others.*

a) Geographic location (i.e. where it is based in South Africa)	
b) Reputation (in terms of academic standing and the quality of education)	
c) Ease with which you will be accepted	
d) Tuition fees	
e) Campus safety	
f) Campus social programme and the clubs/societies on offer	
g) Financial aid & other funding offered	
h) Relatives & friends having attended and recommended a institution	

5. How efficient is the average application process? 

Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
-----------	------	------	------	-----------

6. Bearing in mind your experiences, how would you like to see the applications system improved?

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7. Please rate the credibility of the tertiary education advice/opinions provided by the following parties.  
Please make a single cross in each row indicating your answer:

	1 = no credibility	2 = little credibility	3 = average credibility	4 = considerable credibility	5 = exceptional credibility
School teachers & headmasters					
Parents					
Extended family (i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.)					
Friends & Siblings (brothers & sisters)					
Journalists (i.e. the media)					

8. Please rate the following factors, on a scale from 1 to 10, in terms of having a pre-application relationship with an education institution (e.g. belonging to a “school’s club”). 1 = not at all important; 10 = absolutely critical. *Please note that each factor should be rated independently of the others.*

a) Obtaining free merchandise (e.g. university branded pens, sweaters, etc.)	
b) Expedited (streamlined) application process	
c) Availability of special bursaries, scholarships and other financial aid	
d) Special attention in terms of curriculum advice	
e) Reduced <u>application</u> fees	
f) Prestige of belonging to an exclusive club and being ‘head hunted’	
g) Invitations to participate in social events prior to registration	

9. If a number of universities/technikons were interested in ‘head hunting’ you (i.e. establishing a relationship with you prior to application time in a quest to entice you to join their specific institution), how many institutions would you wish to be closely associated with?

None	One	Two	Three	Four	The more the better
------	-----	-----	-------	------	---------------------

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE –  
YOUR TIME AND THOUGHTS ARE VERY MUCH APPRECIATED!**

## **APPENDIX III**

# **ANOVA STATISTICS AND GRAPHICAL OUTPUTS**

### Question 1a: Ethnic group analysis

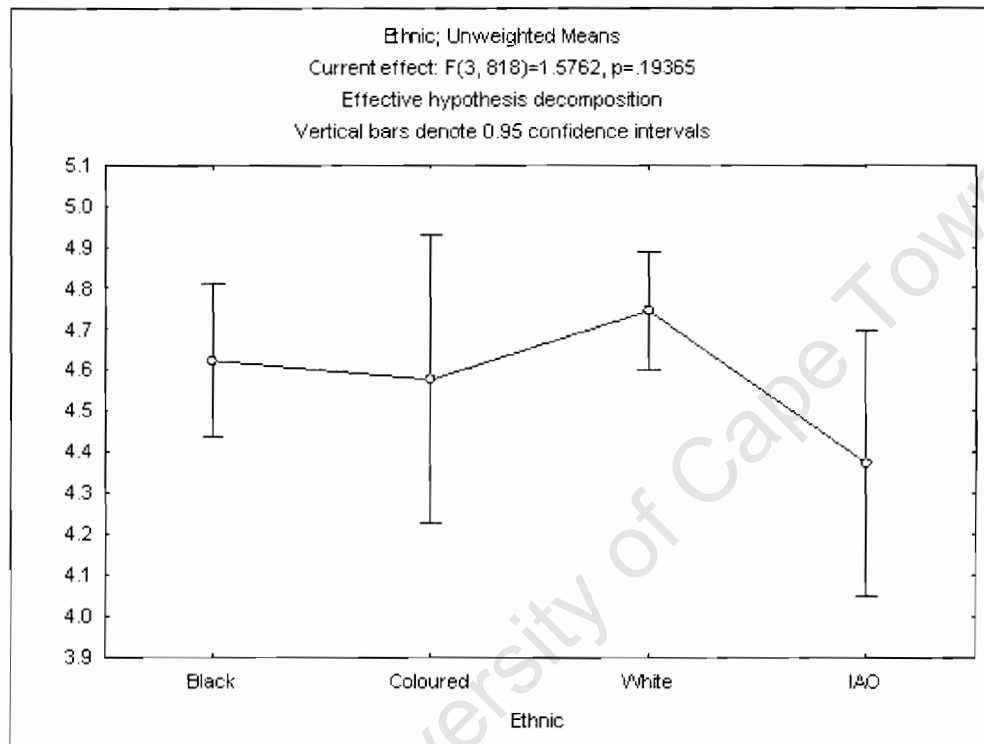
$H_0: \mu_{\text{black}} = \mu_{\text{coloured}} = \mu_{\text{white}} = \mu_{\text{IAO}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.1: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Ethnic	10.72	3	3.574	1.576	.194

**Graph III.1: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

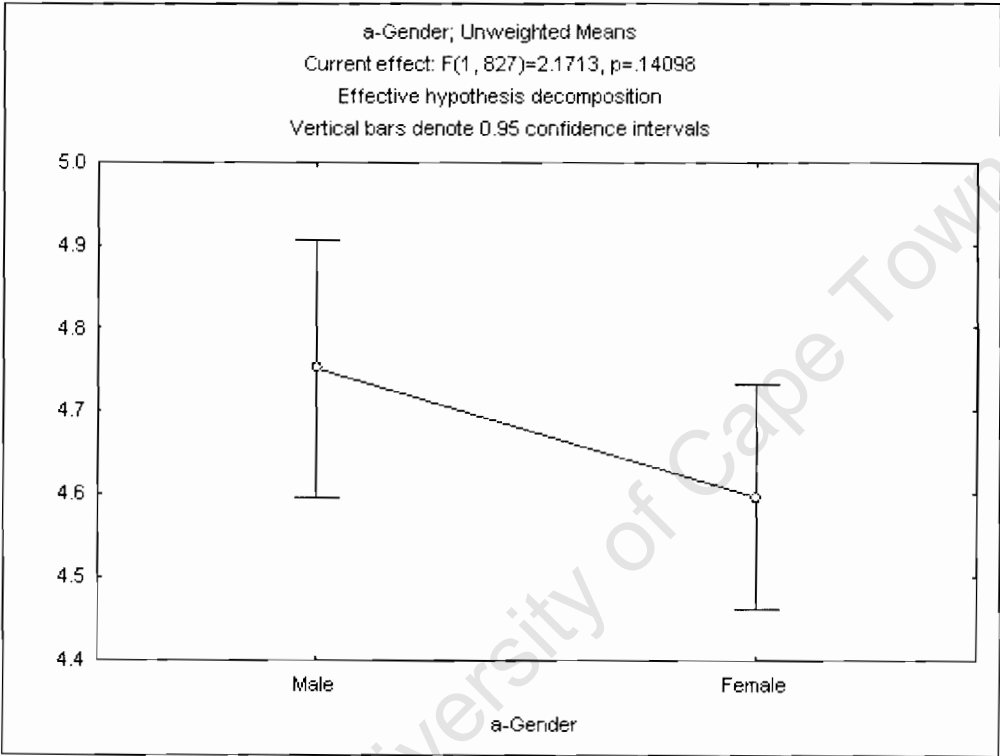
**Question 1a: Gender analysis**

$H_0: \mu_{\text{male}} = \mu_{\text{female}}$   
 $H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.2: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Gender	4.874	1	4.874	2.171	.141

**Graph III.2: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

### Question 1a: Faculty analysis

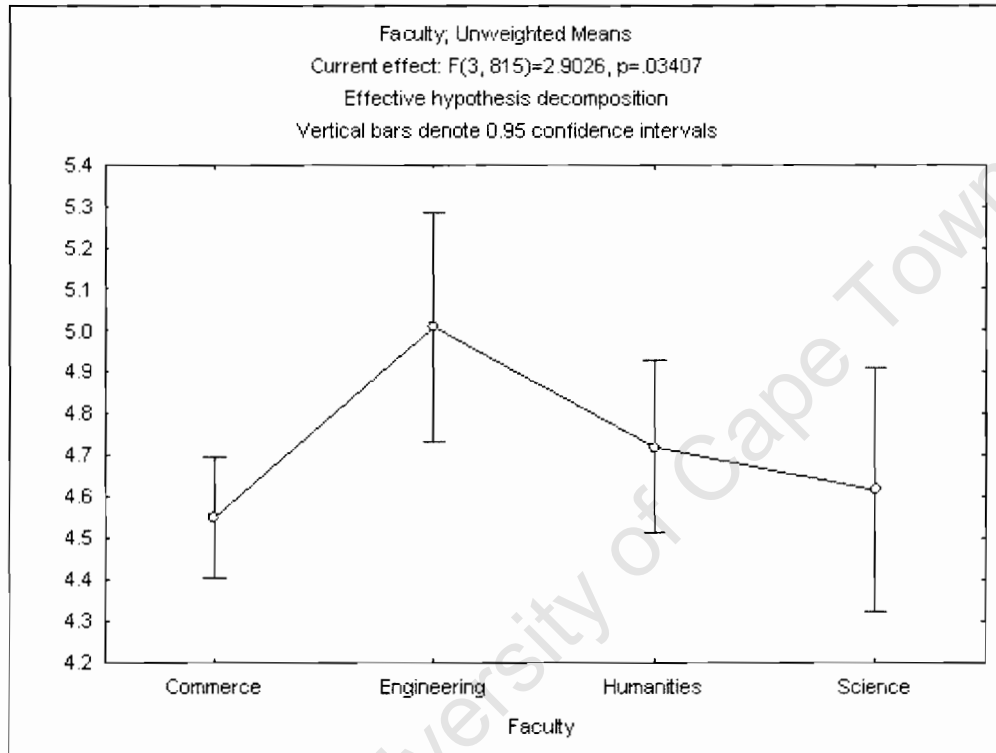
$H_0: \mu_{\text{commerce}} = \mu_{\text{engineering}} = \mu_{\text{science}} = \mu_{\text{humanities}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.3: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Faculty	19.55	3	6.515	2.903	.034*

**Graph III.3: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )

### Question 1a: Matric aggregate analysis

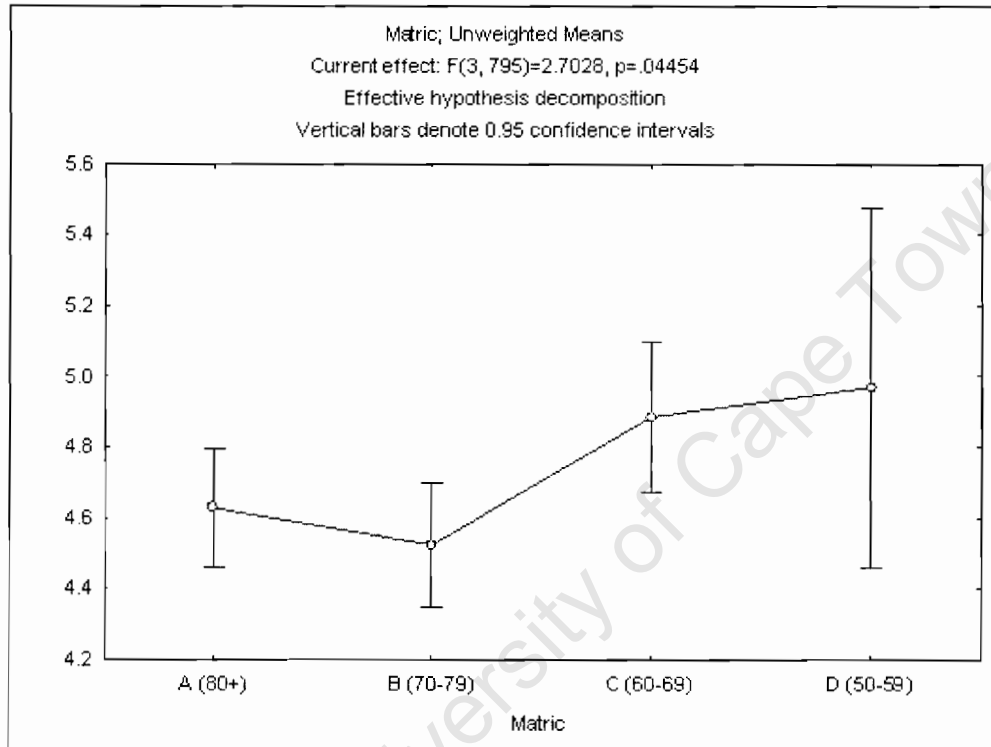
$H_0: \mu_{A \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{B \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{C \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{D \text{ aggregate}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.4: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Matric	17.91	3	5.969	2.703	.045*

**Graph III.4: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )

### Question 1b: Ethnic group analysis

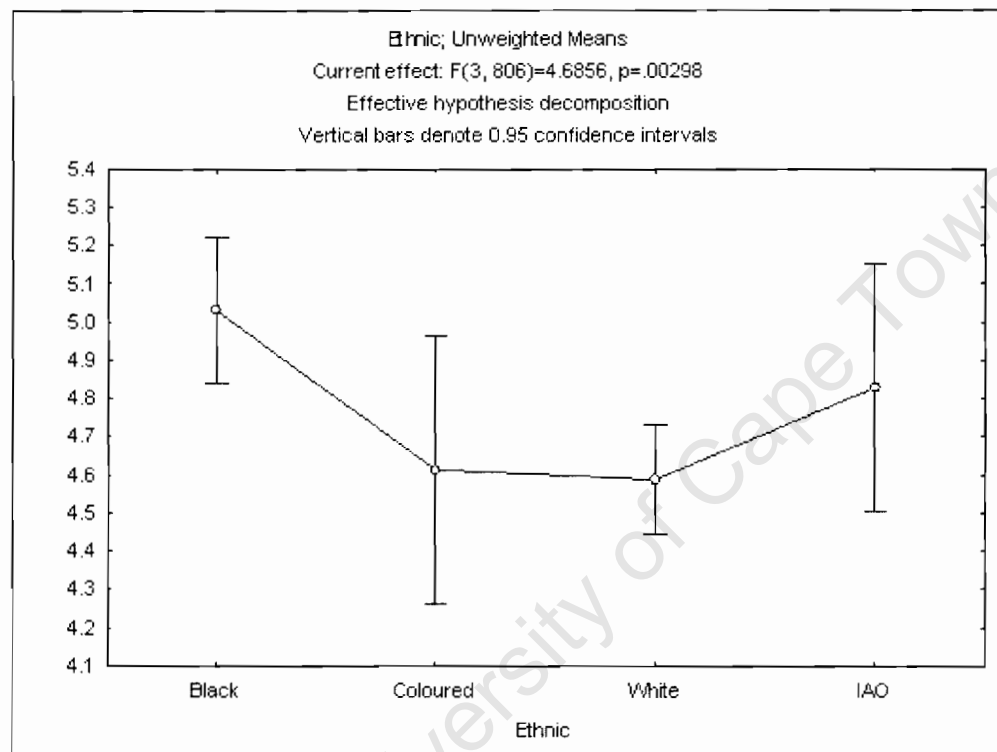
$H_0: \mu_{\text{black}} = \mu_{\text{coloured}} = \mu_{\text{white}} = \mu_{\text{IAO}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.5: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Ethnic	31.37	3	10.46	4.686	.003*

**Graph III.5: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )



### Question 1b: Gender analysis

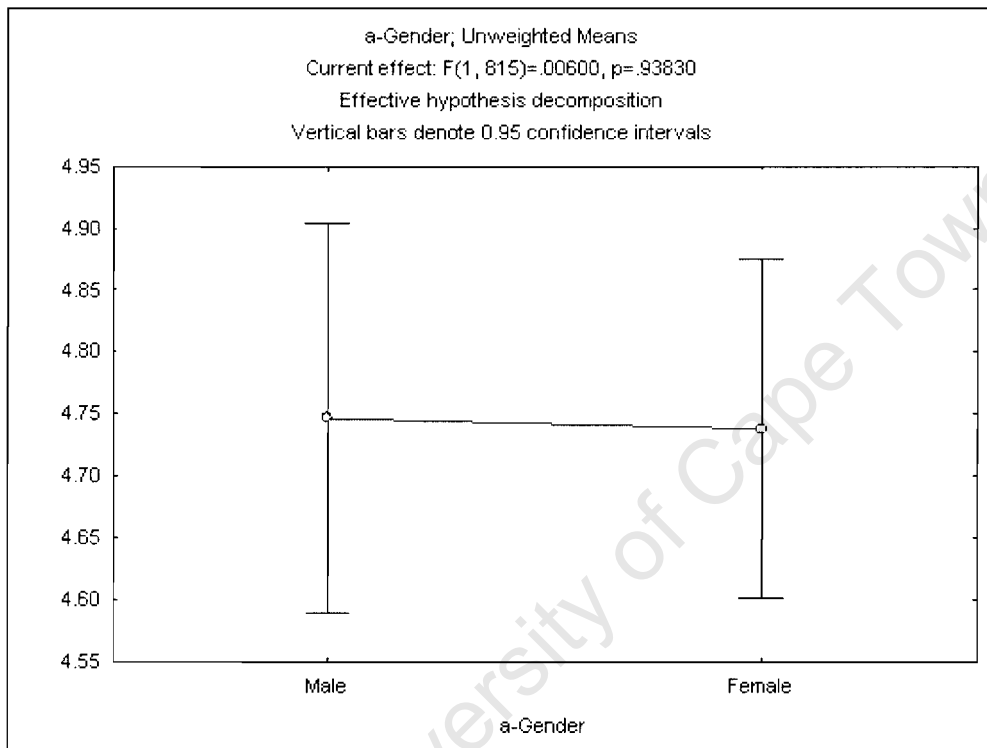
$H_0: \mu_{\text{male}} = \mu_{\text{female}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.6: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Gender	.014	1	.014	.006	.938

**Graph III.6: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

### Question 1b: Faculty analysis

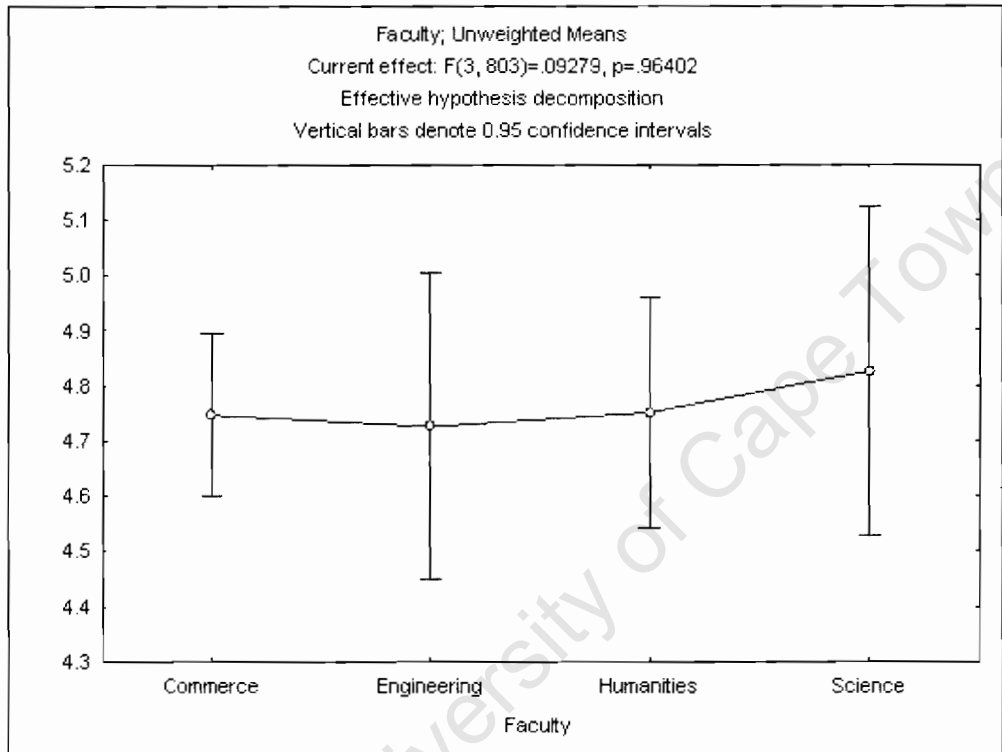
$H_0: \mu_{\text{commerce}} = \mu_{\text{engineering}} = \mu_{\text{science}} = \mu_{\text{humanities}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.7: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Faculty	.628	3	.209	.093	.964

Graph III.7: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p > 0.05$ )

### Question 1b: Matric aggregate analysis

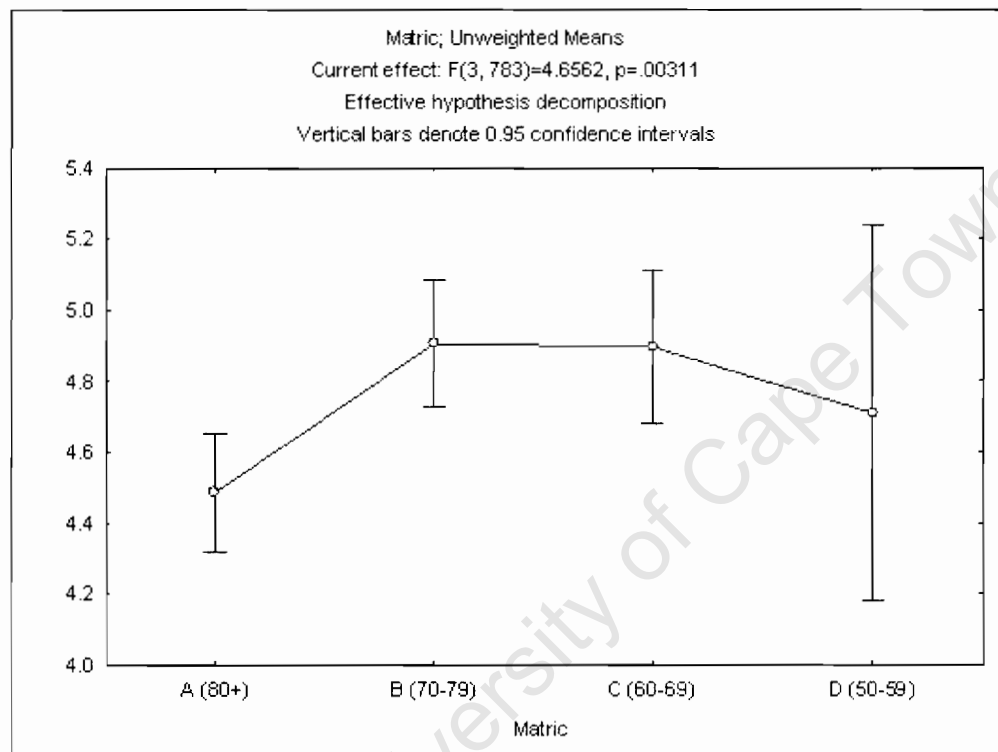
$H_0: \mu_A \text{ aggregate} = \mu_B \text{ aggregate} = \mu_C \text{ aggregate} = \mu_D \text{ aggregate}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.8: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Matric	31.44	3	10.48	4.656	.003*

Graph III.8: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )

### Question 1c: Ethnic group analysis

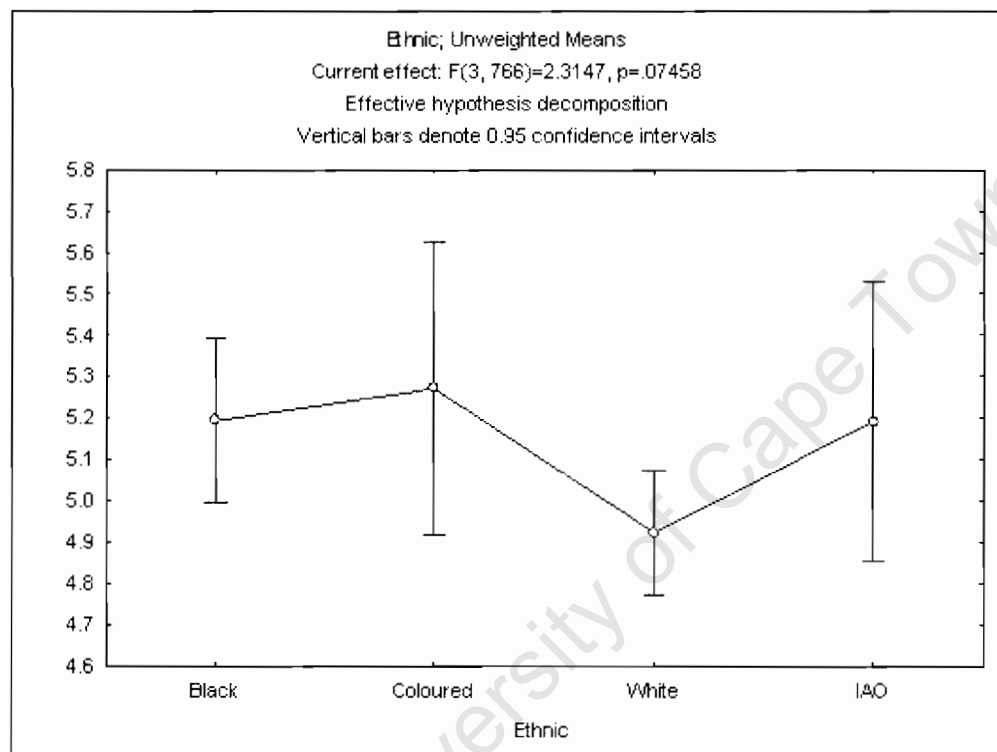
$H_0: \mu_{\text{black}} = \mu_{\text{coloured}} = \mu_{\text{white}} = \mu_{\text{IAO}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.9: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Ethnic	15.86	3	5.286	2.315	.075

**Graph III.9: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

### Question 1c: Gender analysis

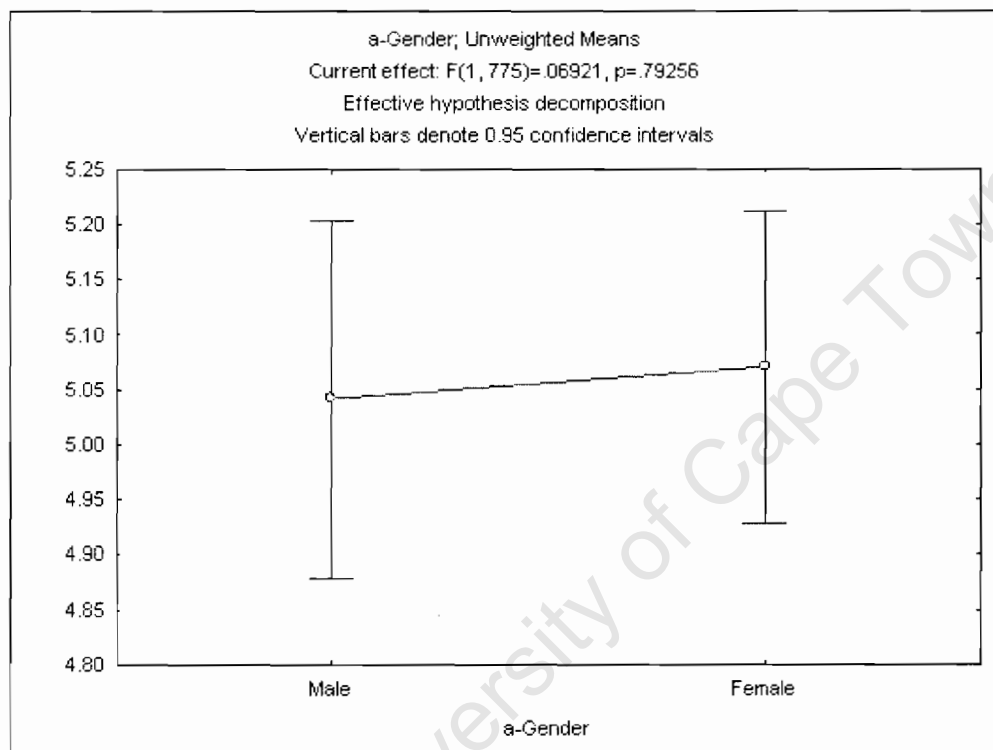
$H_0: \mu_{\text{male}} = \mu_{\text{female}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.10: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Gender	.160	1	.160	.069	.793

**Graph III.10: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

### Question 1c: Faculty analysis

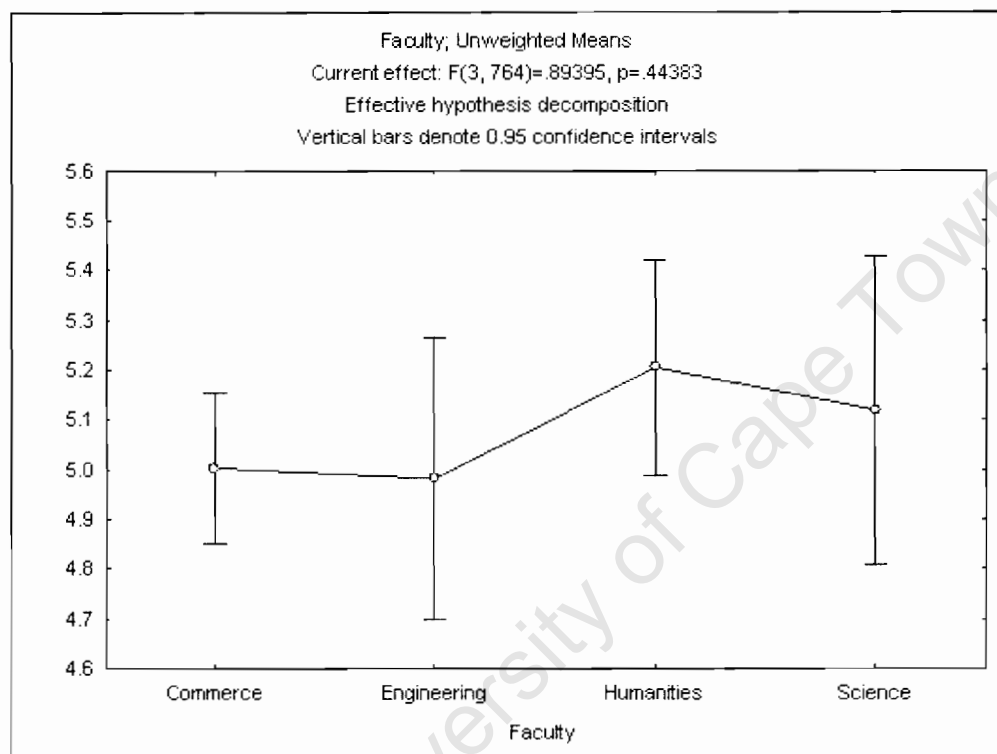
$H_0: \mu_{\text{commerce}} = \mu_{\text{engineering}} = \mu_{\text{science}} = \mu_{\text{humanities}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.11: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Faculty	6.118	3	2.039	.894	.444

Graph III.11: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p > 0.05$ )

### Question 1c: Matric aggregate analysis

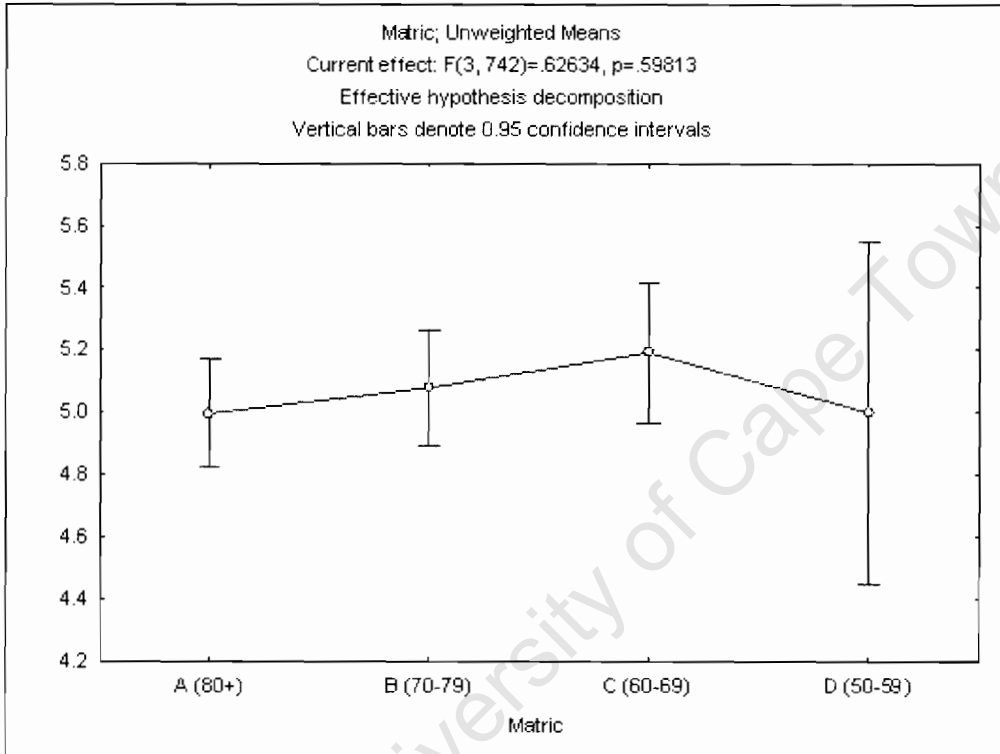
$H_0: \mu_{A \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{B \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{C \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{D \text{ aggregate}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.12: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Matric	4.285	3	1.428	.626	.598

Graph III.12: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

## Question 2: Ethnic group analysis

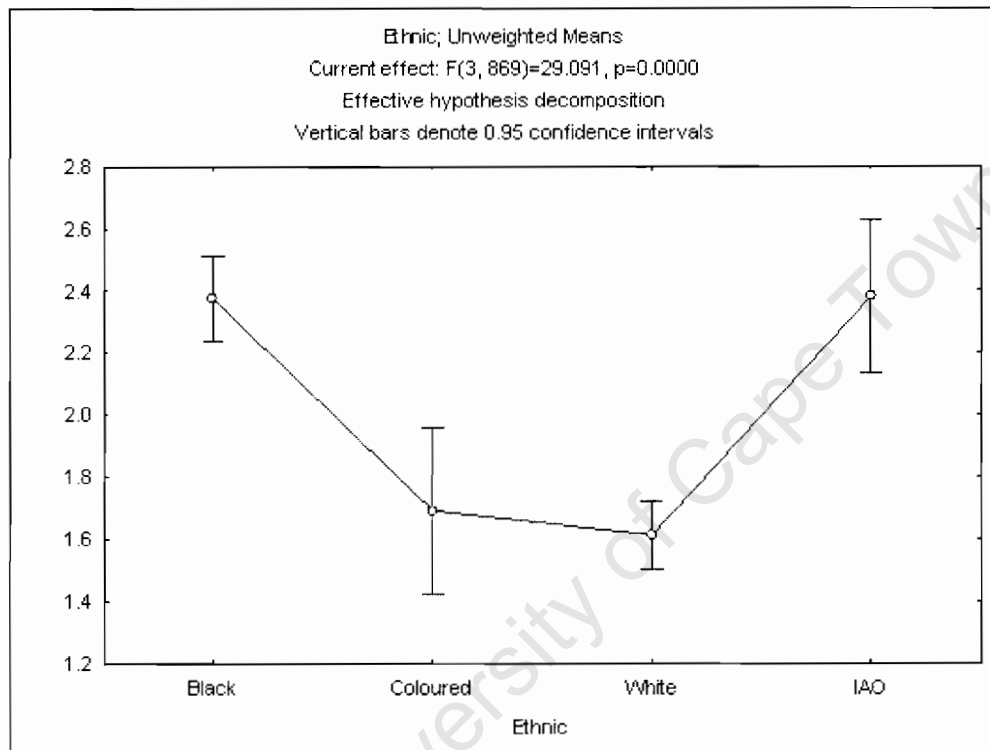
$H_0: \mu_{\text{black}} = \mu_{\text{coloured}} = \mu_{\text{white}} = \mu_{\text{IAO}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.13: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Ethnic	120.5	3	40.18	29.09	0.00*

**Graph III.13: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )



## Question 2: Gender analysis

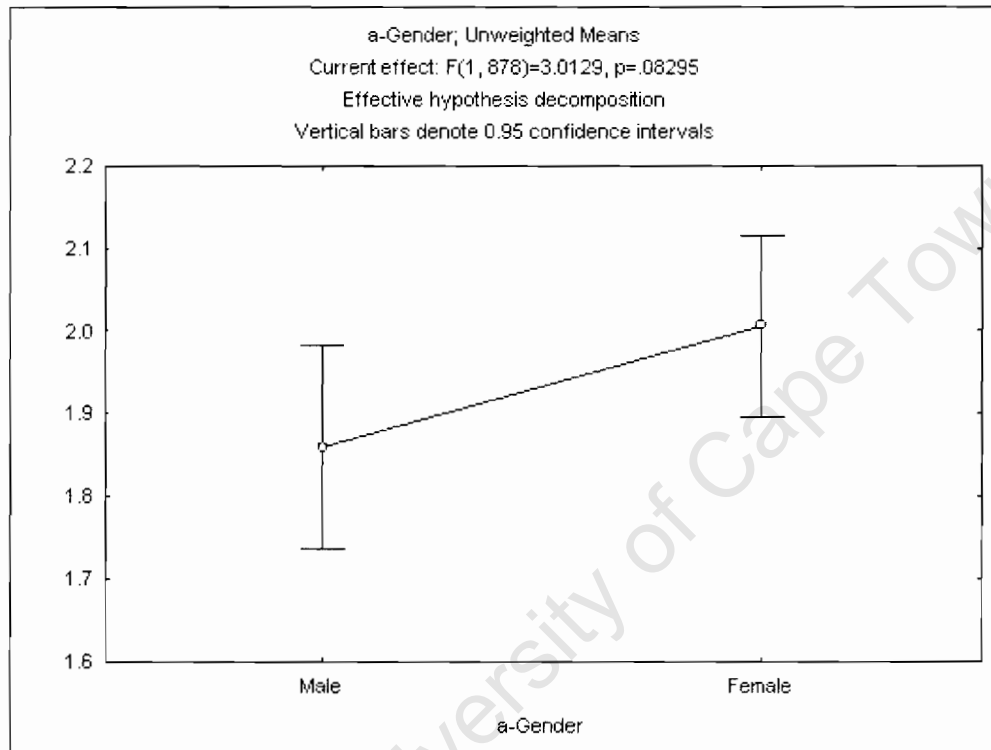
$H_0: \mu_{\text{male}} = \mu_{\text{female}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.14: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Gender	4.617	1	4.617	3.013	.083

Graph III.14: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

## Question 2: Faculty analysis

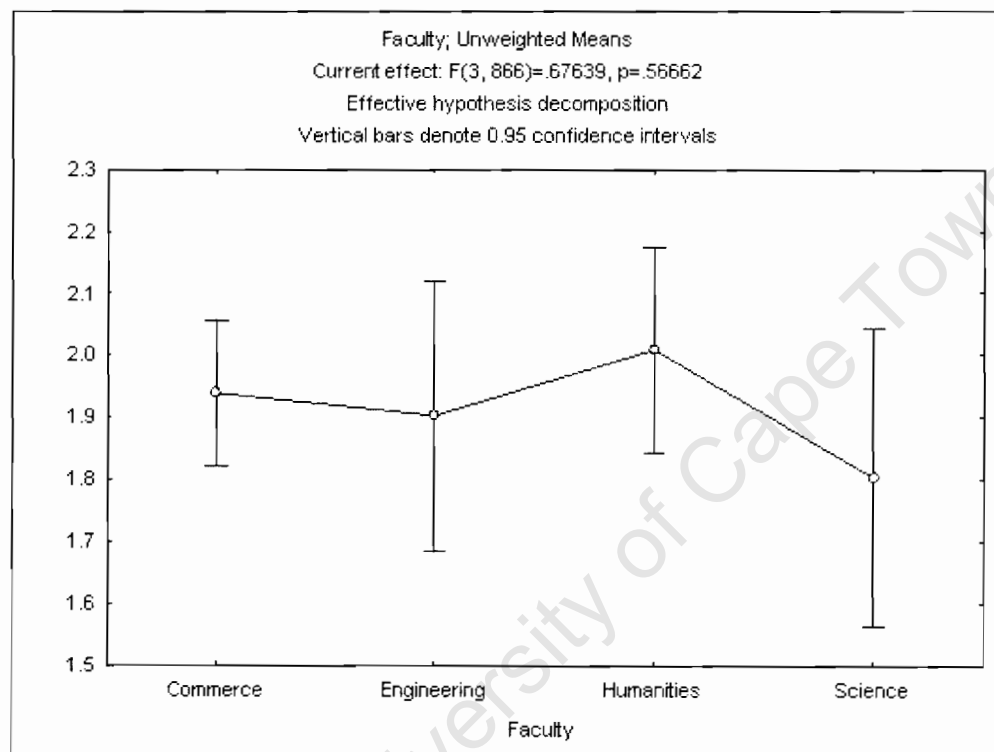
$H_0: \mu_{\text{commerce}} = \mu_{\text{engineering}} = \mu_{\text{science}} = \mu_{\text{humanities}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.15: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Faculty	3.073	3	1.024	.676	.567

Graph III.15: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p > 0.05$ )

## Question 2: Matric aggregate analysis

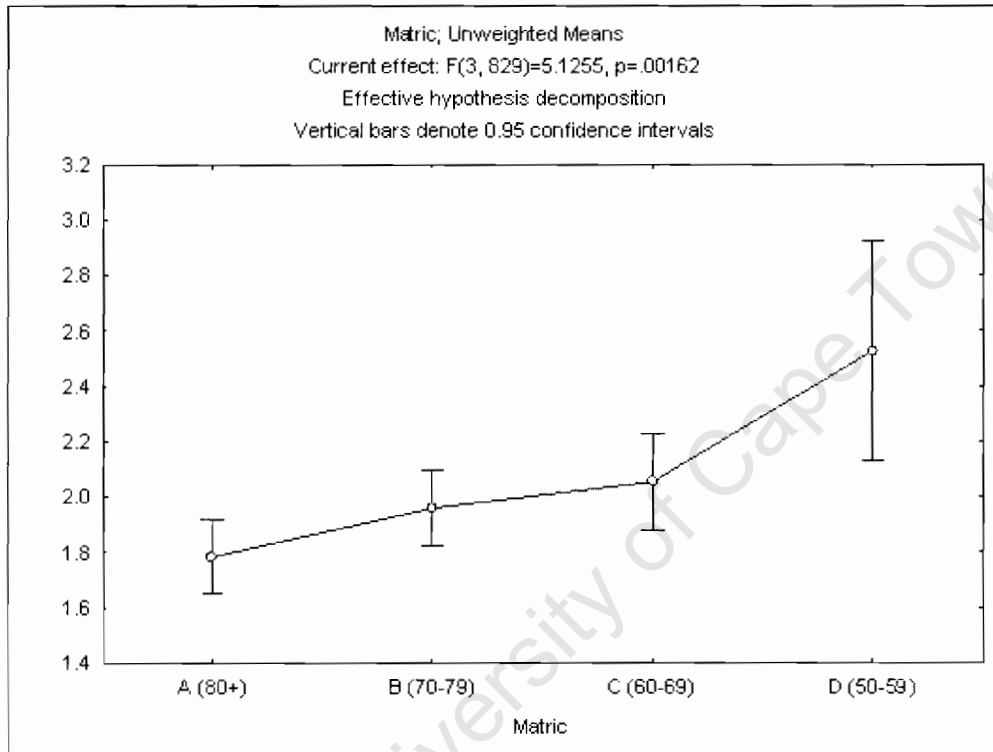
$H_0: \mu_{A \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{B \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{C \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{D \text{ aggregate}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.16: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Matric	22.65	3	7.550	5.125	.002*

Graph III.16: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )

### Question 3: Ethnic group analysis

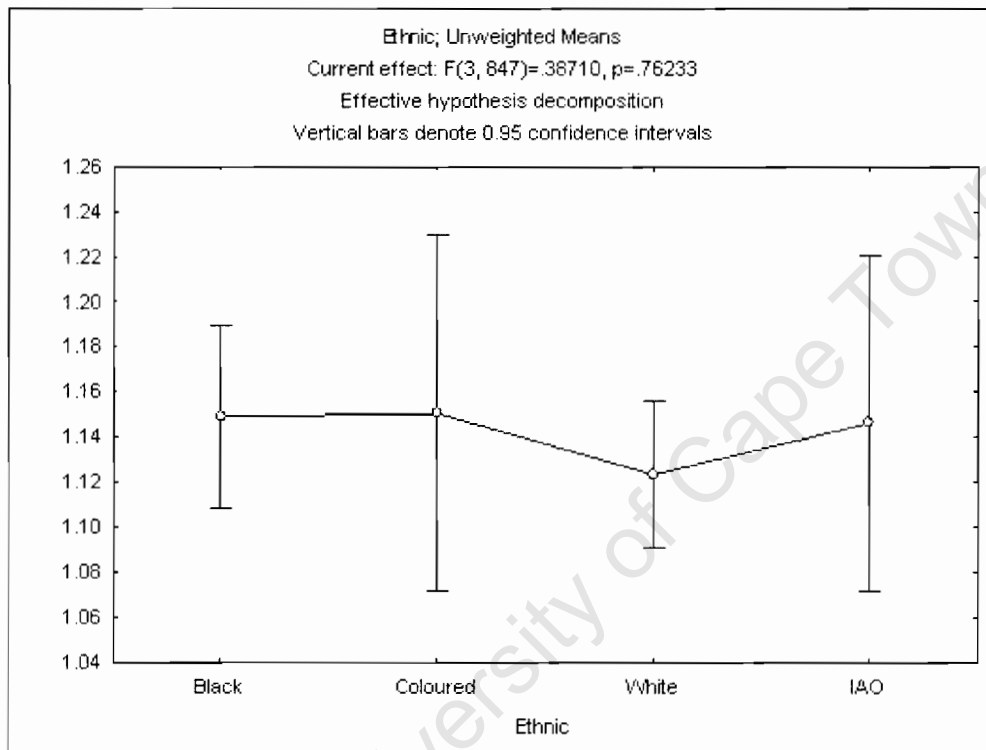
$H_0: \mu_{\text{black}} = \mu_{\text{coloured}} = \mu_{\text{white}} = \mu_{\text{IAO}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

**Table III.17: ANOVA table**

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Ethnic	.137	3	.046	.387	.762

**Graph III.17: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

### Question 3: Gender analysis

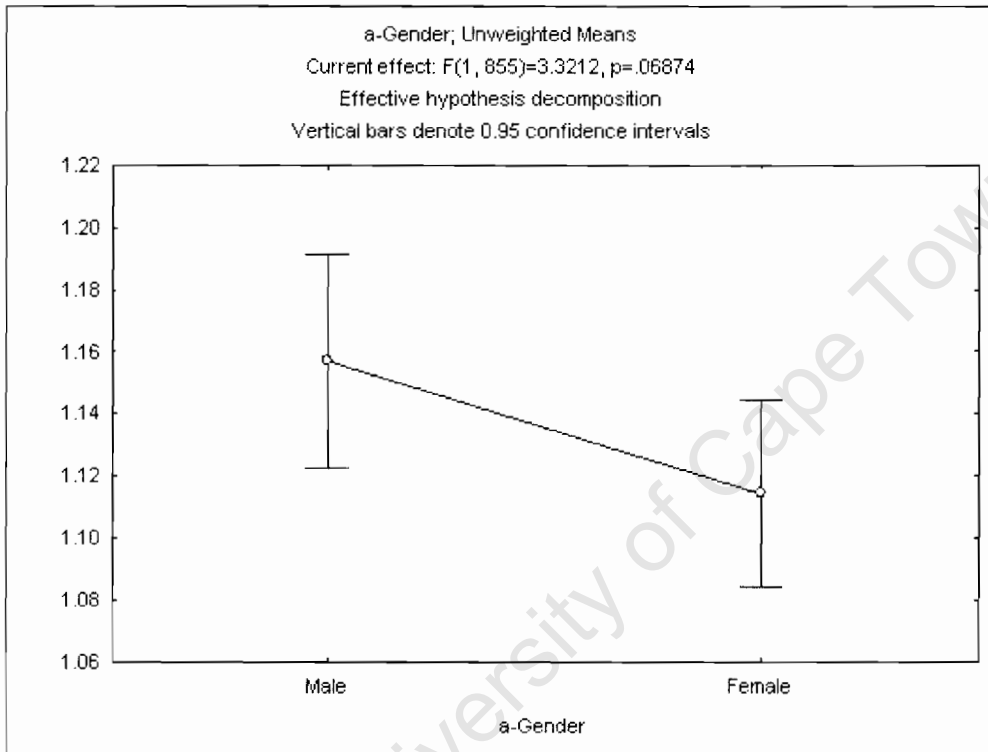
$H_0: \mu_{\text{male}} = \mu_{\text{female}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.18: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Gender	.382	1	.382	3.321	.069

Graph III.18: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

### Question 3: Faculty analysis

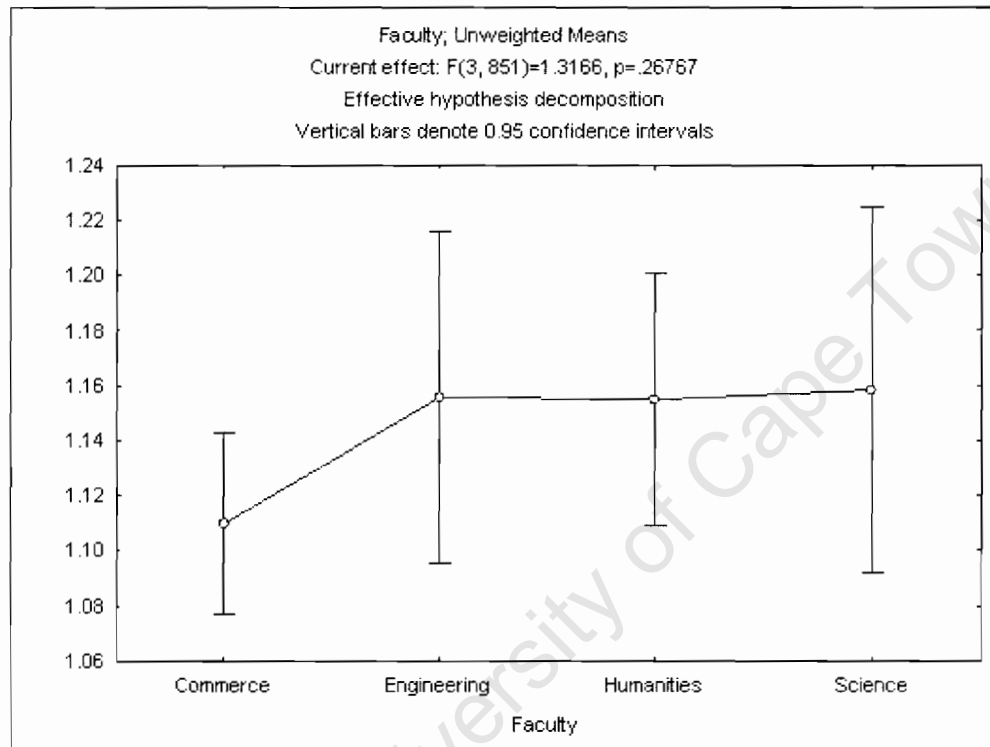
$H_0: \mu_{\text{commerce}} = \mu_{\text{engineering}} = \mu_{\text{science}} = \mu_{\text{humanities}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.19: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Faculty	.456	3	.152	1.317	.268

Graph III.19: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

### Question 3: Matric aggregate analysis

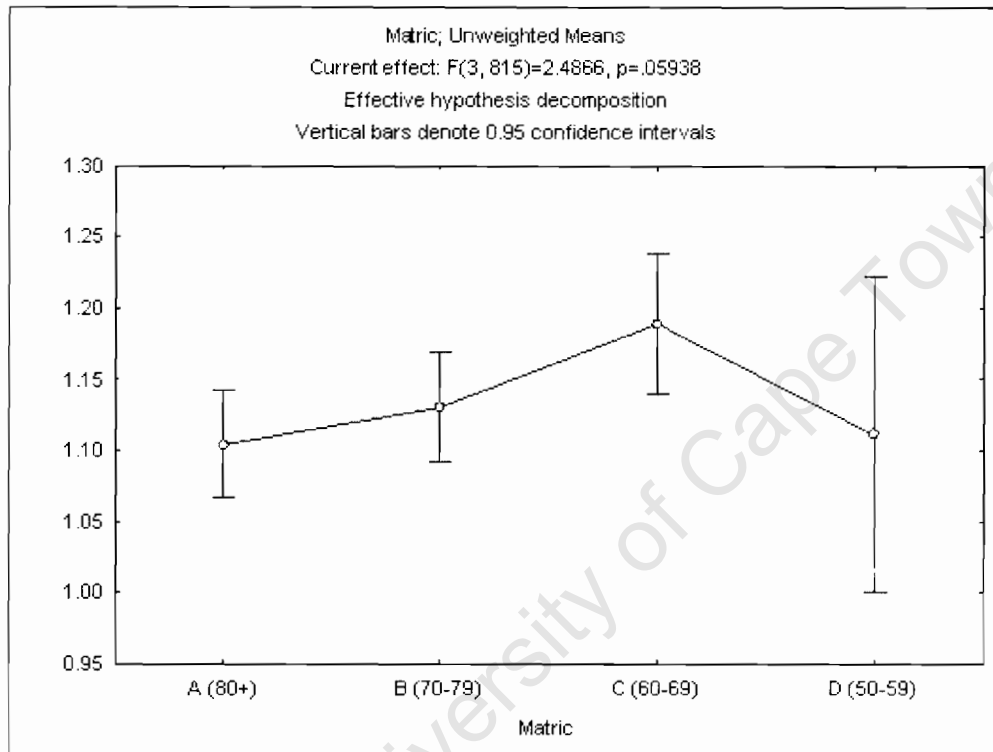
$H_0: \mu_{A \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{B \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{C \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{D \text{ aggregate}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.20: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Matric	.857	3	.286	2.487	.059

Graph III.20: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

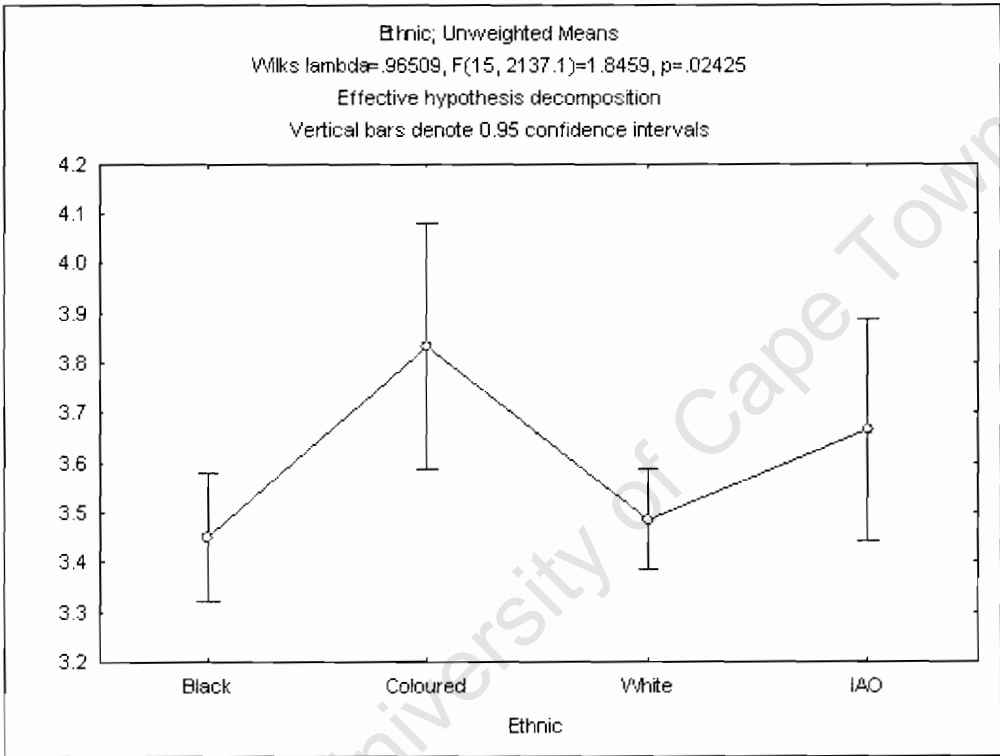
Question 7: Ethnic group analysis

$H_0: \mu_{black} = \mu_{coloured} = \mu_{white} = \mu_{IAO}$   
 $H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.21: ANOVA table

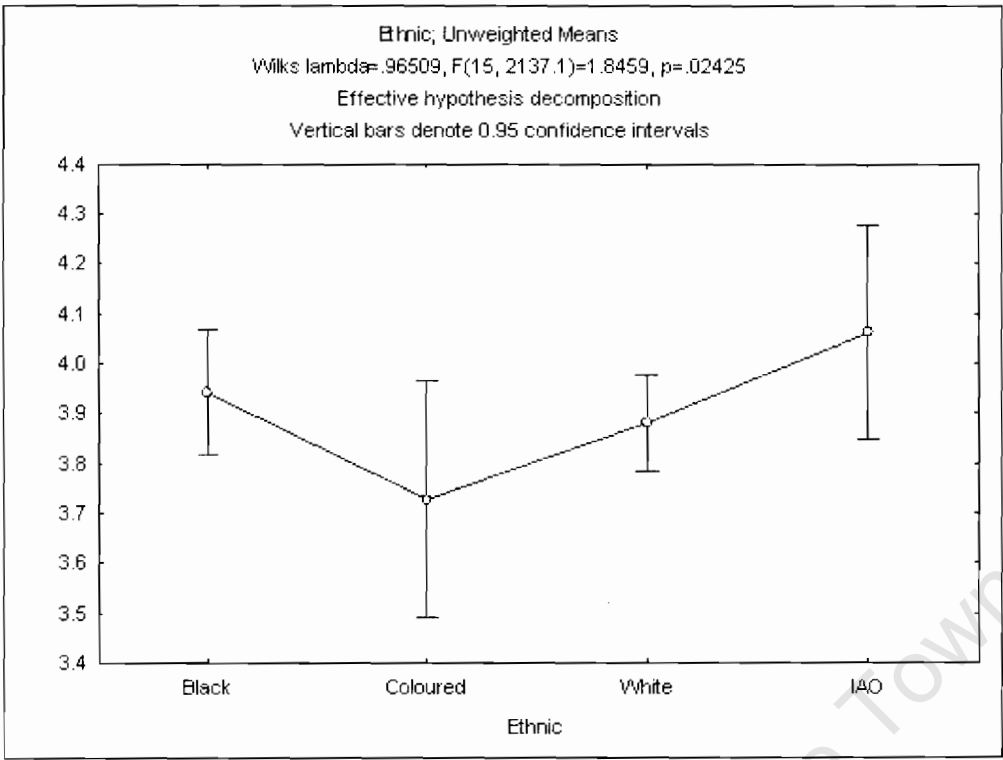
Effect	Wilks' Lambda	F-ratio	Effect – degrees of freedom	Error – degrees of freedom	P value
Ethnic	.965	1.846	15	2137	.024*

Graph III.21: Means and standard deviations plot

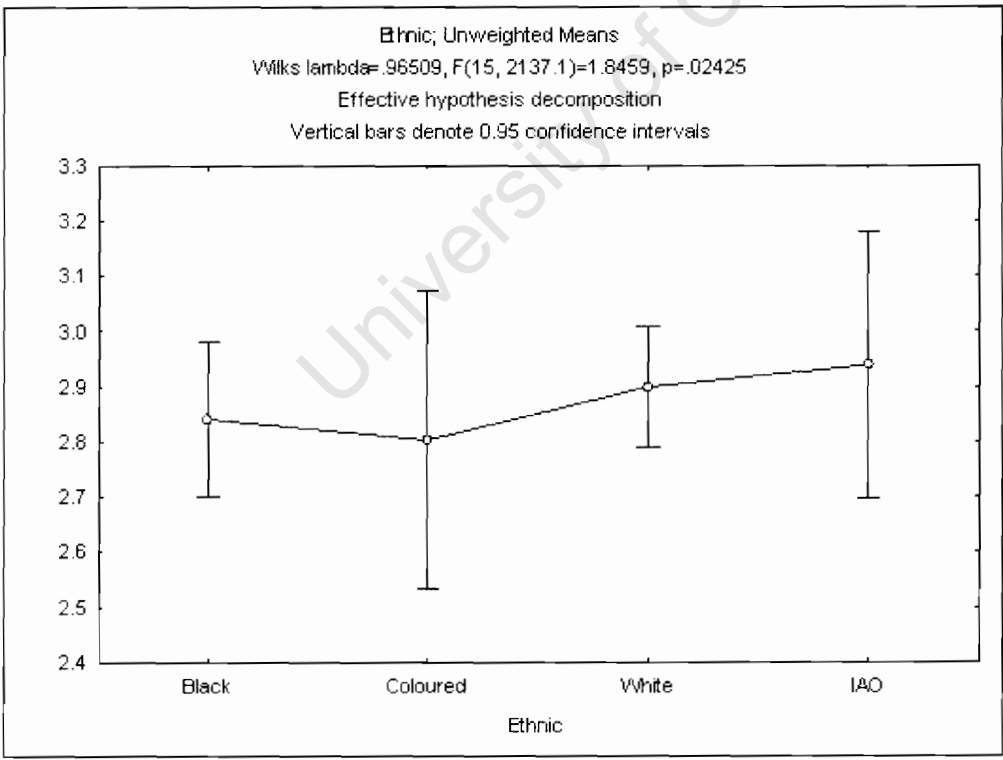




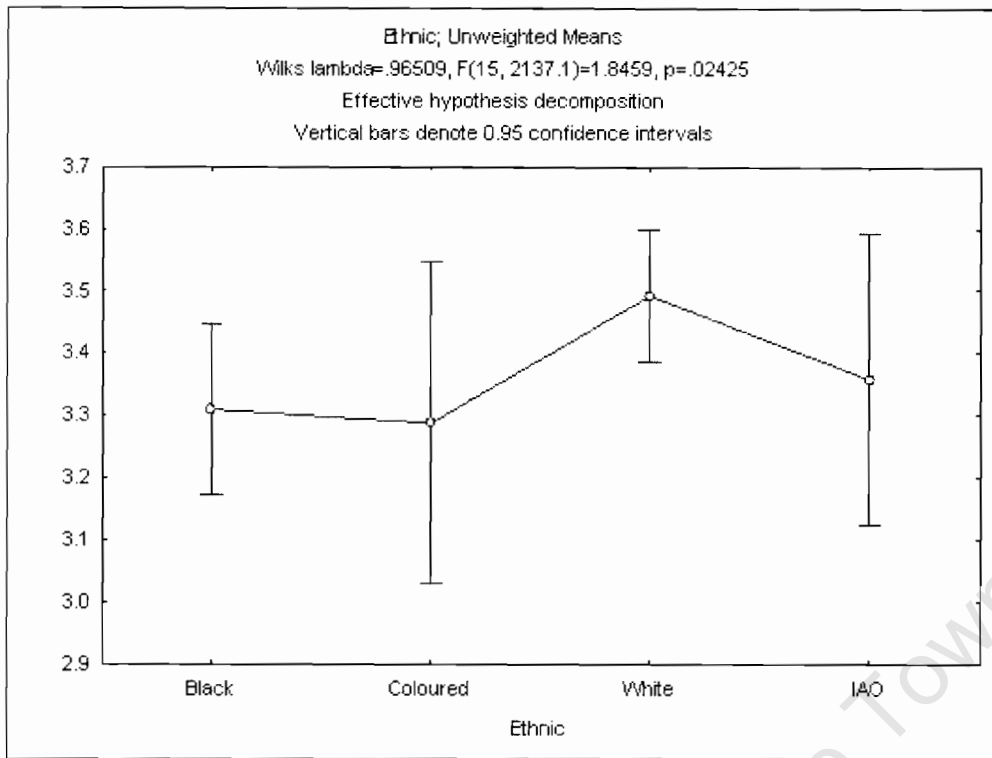
**Graph III.22: Means and standard deviations plot**



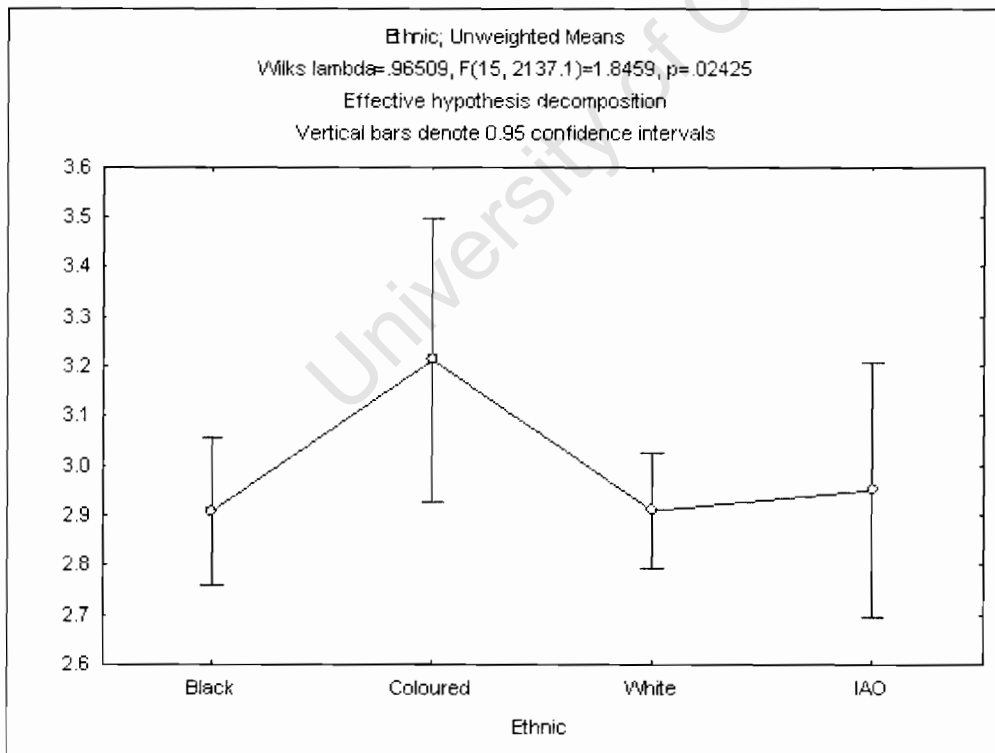
**Graph III.23: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Graph III.24: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Graph III.25: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result (overall):** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )

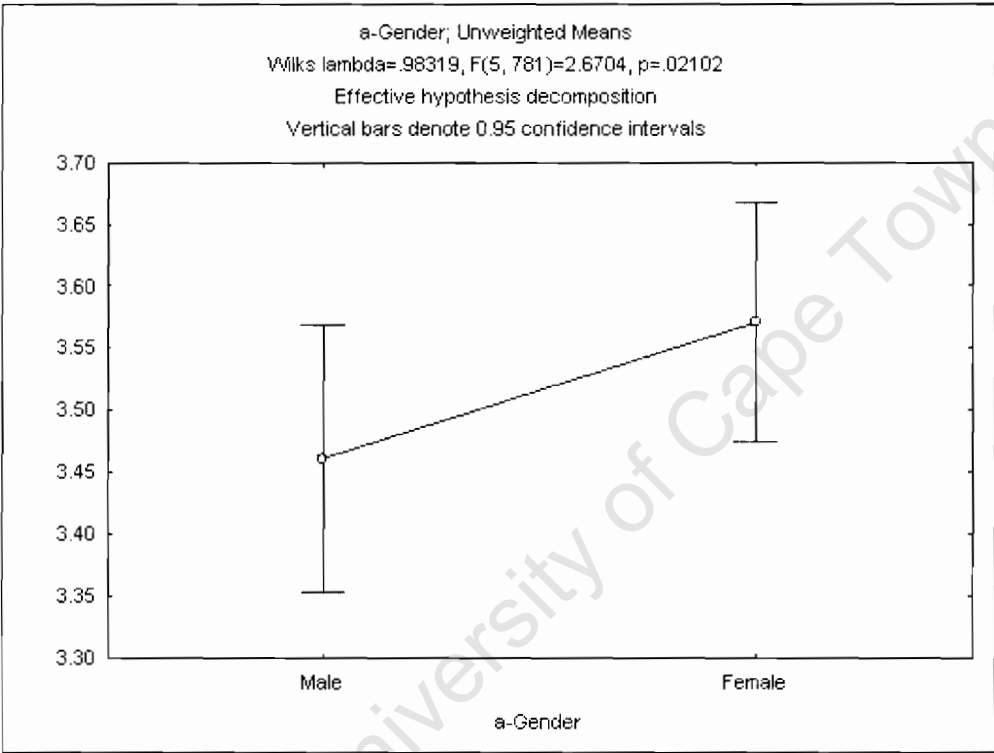
Question 7: Gender analysis

$H_0: \mu_{\text{male}} = \mu_{\text{female}}$   
 $H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

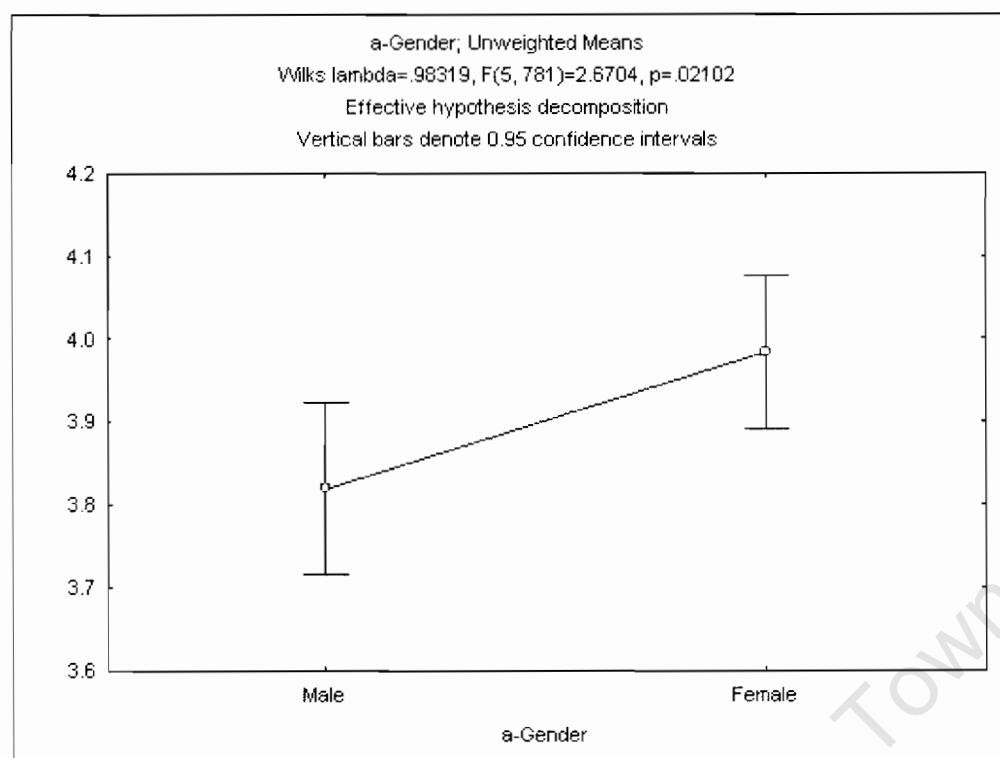
Table III.22: ANOVA table

Effect	Wilks' Lambda	F-ratio	Effect – degrees of freedom	Error – degrees of freedom	P value
Gender	.983	2.670	5	781	.021*

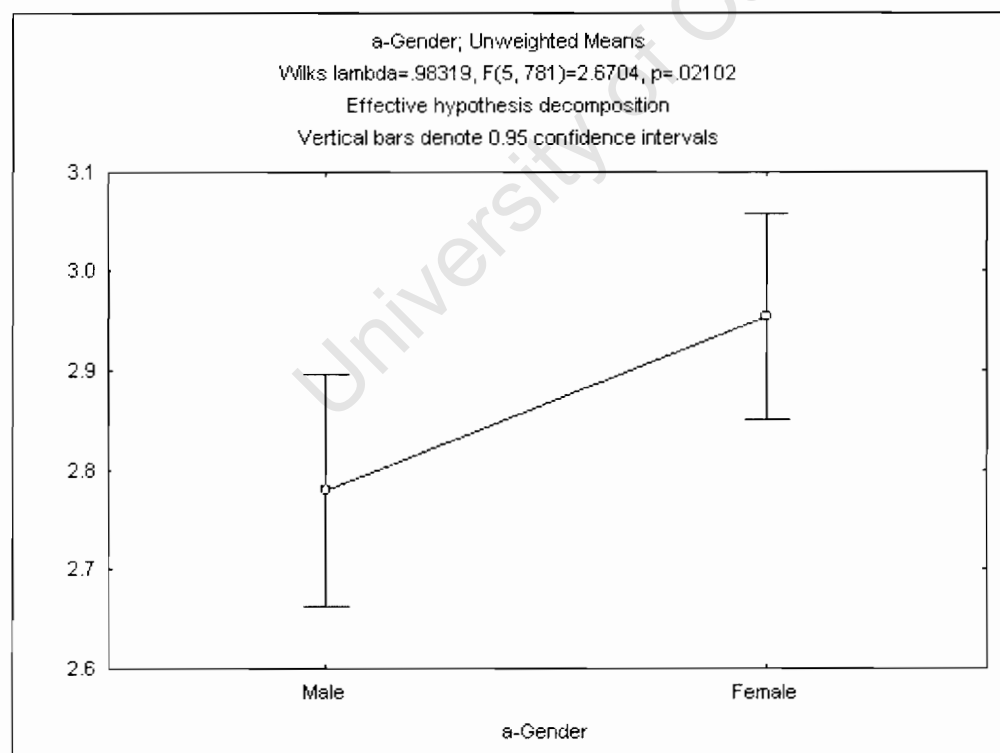
Graph III.26: Means and standard deviations plot



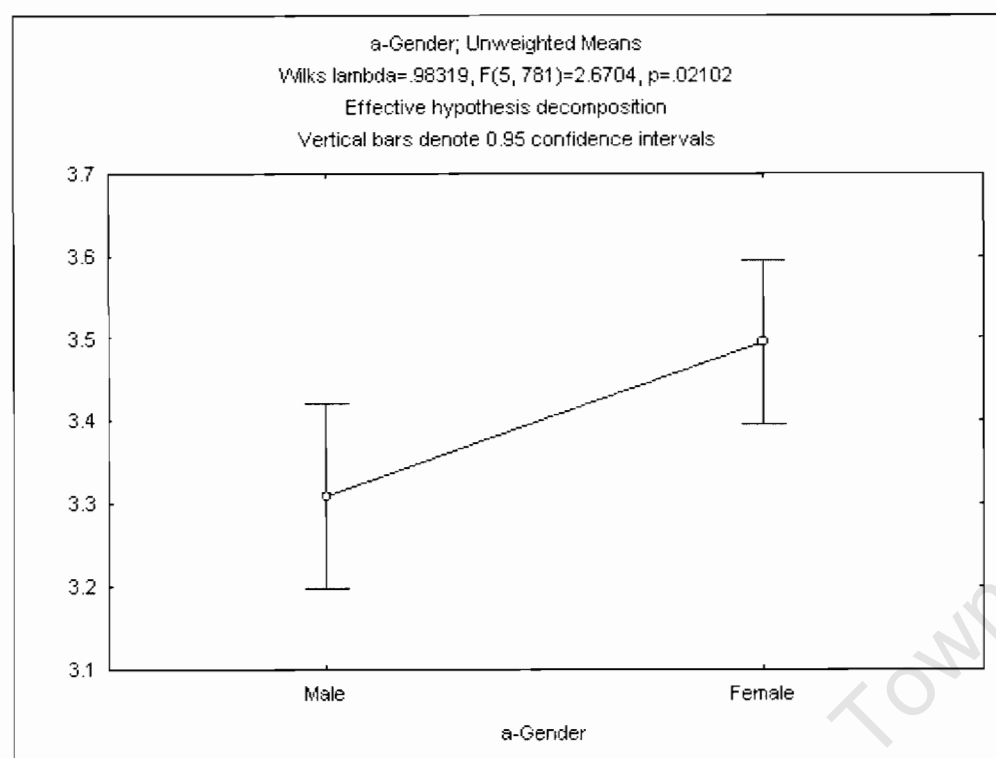
**Graph III.27: Means and standard deviations plot**



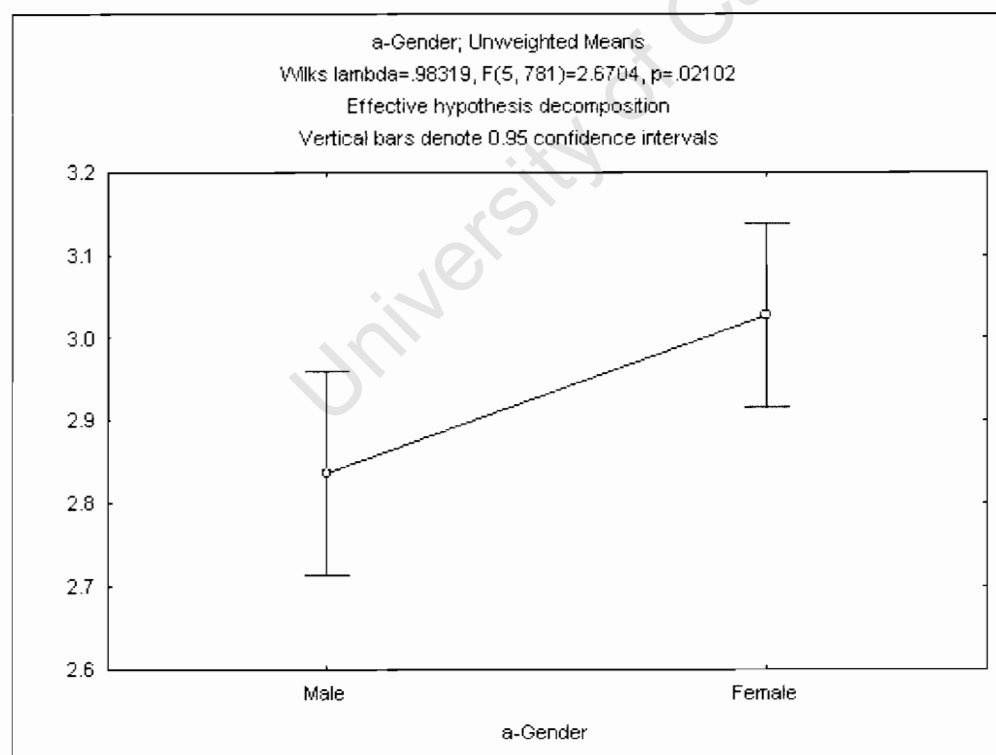
**Graph III.28: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Graph III.29: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Graph III.30: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result (overall):** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )

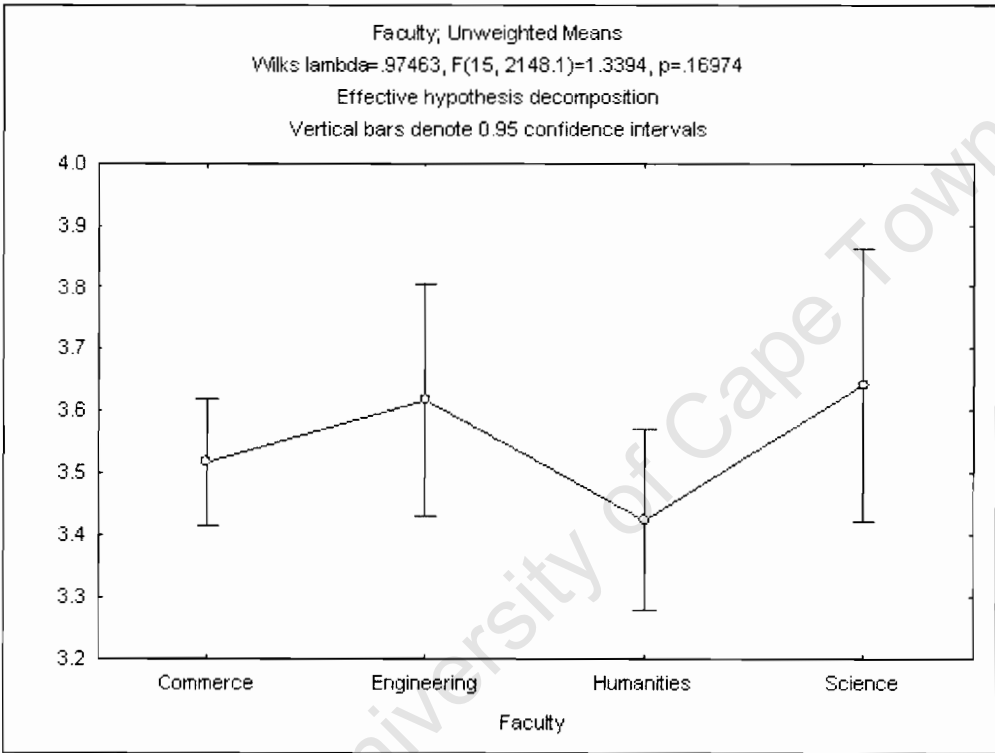
**Question 7: Faculty analysis**

$H_0: \mu_{commerce} = \mu_{engineering} = \mu_{science} = \mu_{humanities}$   
 $H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

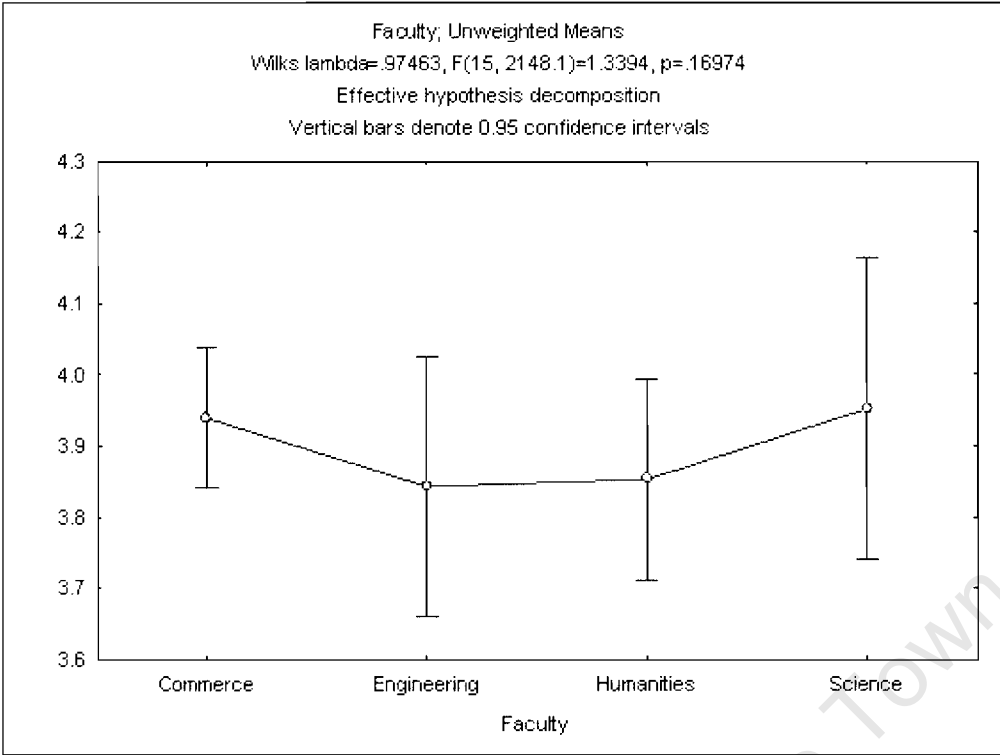
**Table III.23: ANOVA table**

Effect	Wilks' Lambda	F-ratio	Effect – degrees of freedom	Error – degrees of freedom	P value
Faculty	.975	1.339	15	2148	.170

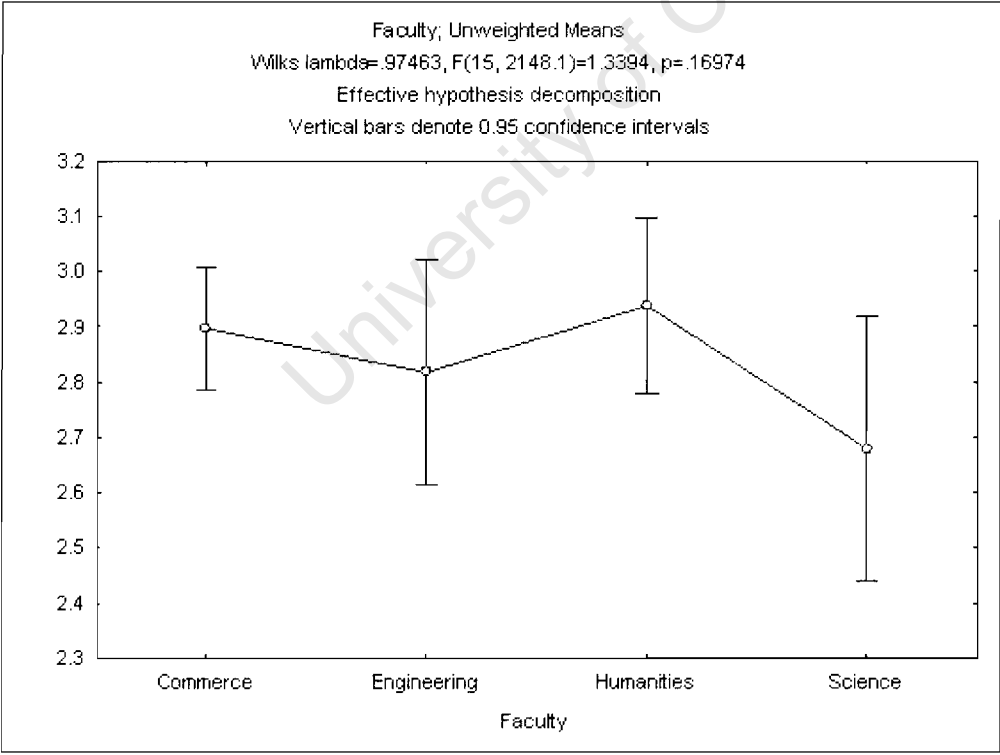
**Graph III.31: Means and standard deviations plot**



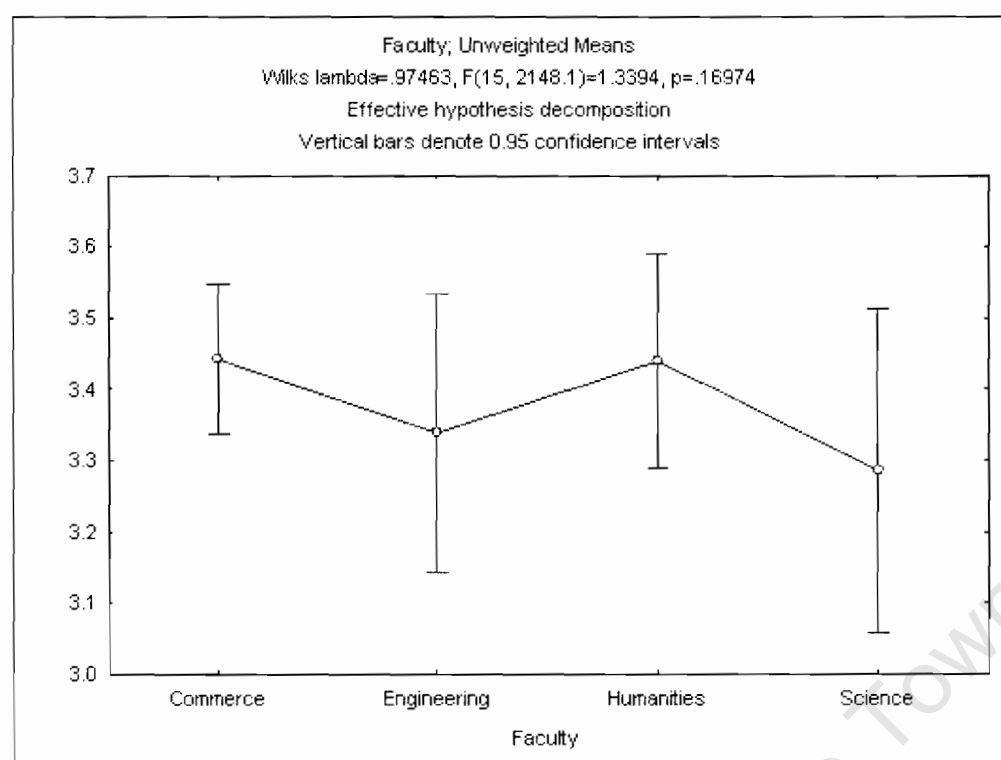
**Graph III.32: Means and standard deviations plot**



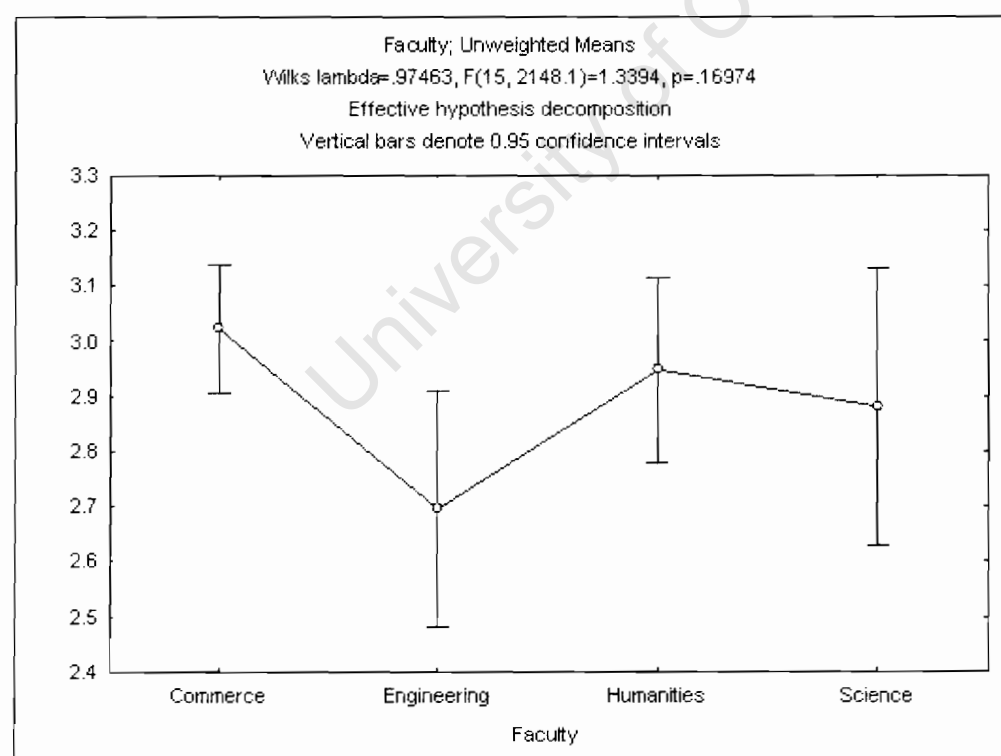
**Graph III.33: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Graph III.34: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Graph III.35: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result (overall):** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )



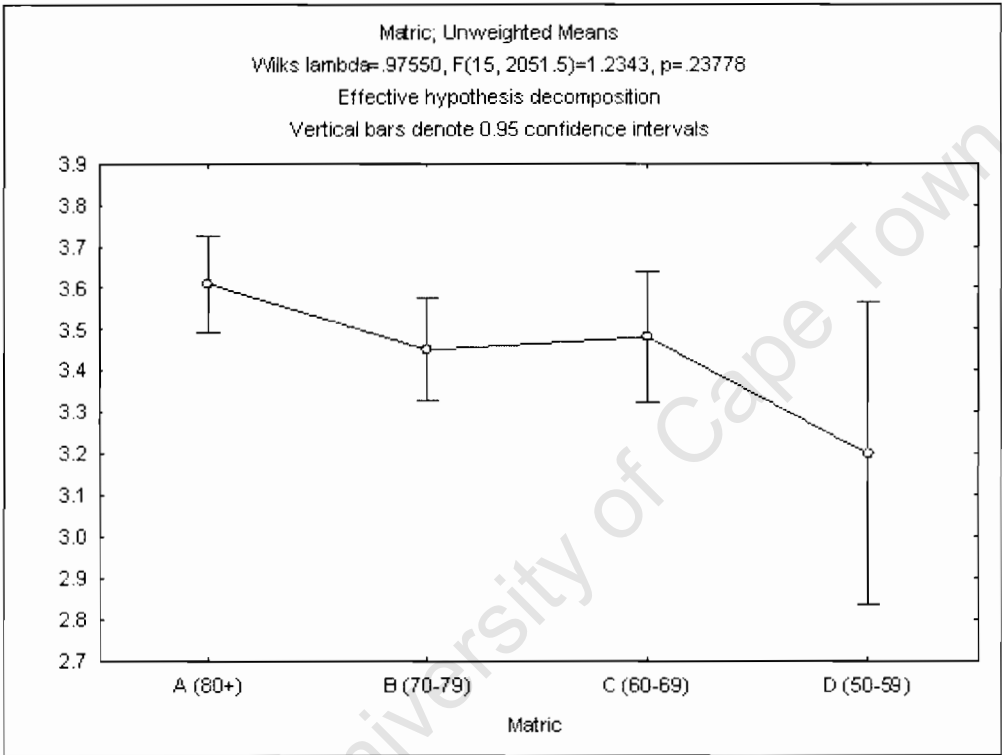
**Question 7: Matric aggregate analysis**

$H_0: \mu_A \text{ aggregate} = \mu_B \text{ aggregate} = \mu_C \text{ aggregate} = \mu_D \text{ aggregate}$   
 $H_1: \text{At least one mean differs across the treatment levels}$

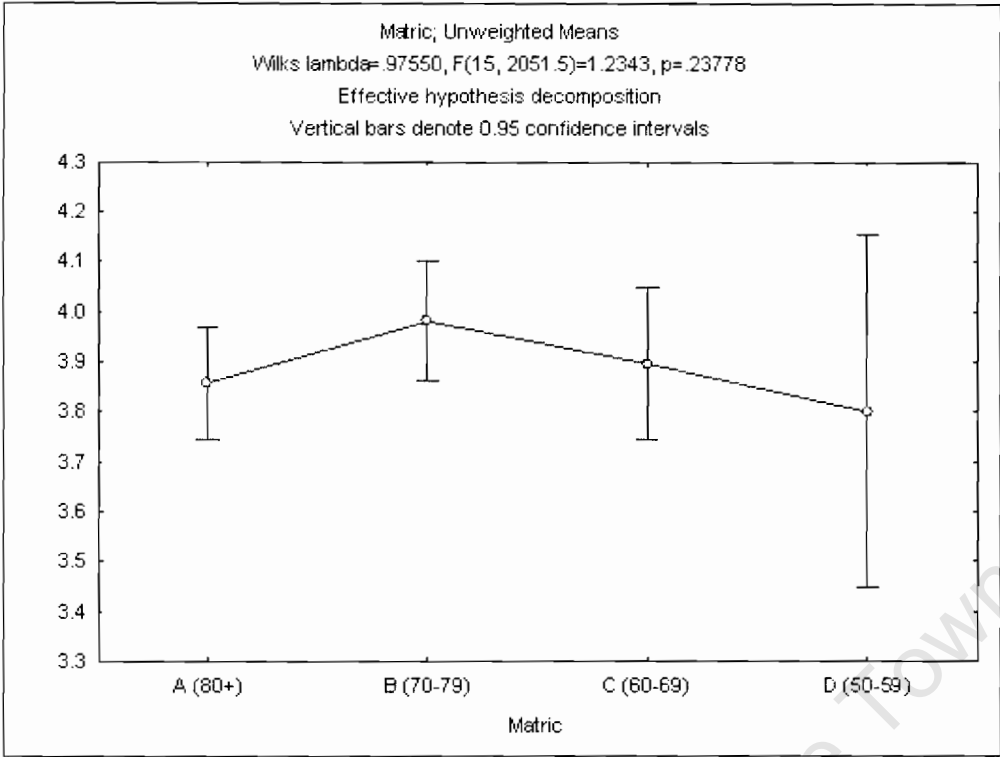
**Table III.24: ANOVA table**

Effect	Wilks' Lambda	F-ratio	Effect – degrees of freedom	Error – degrees of freedom	P value
Matric	.976	1.234	15	2051	.238

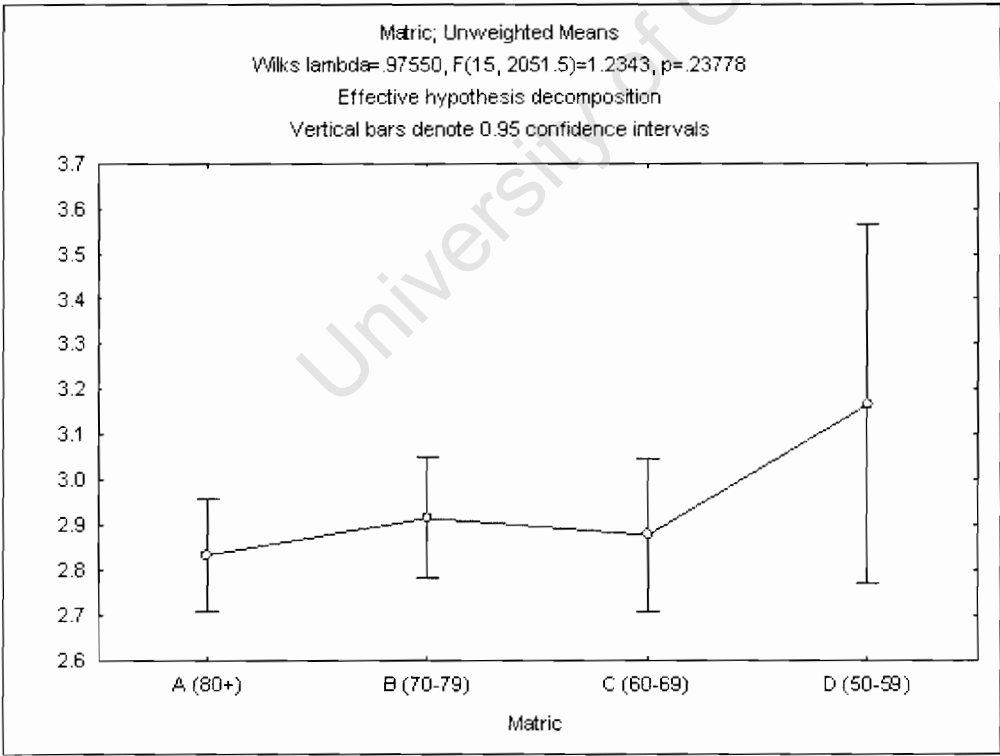
**Graph III.36: Means and standard deviations plot**



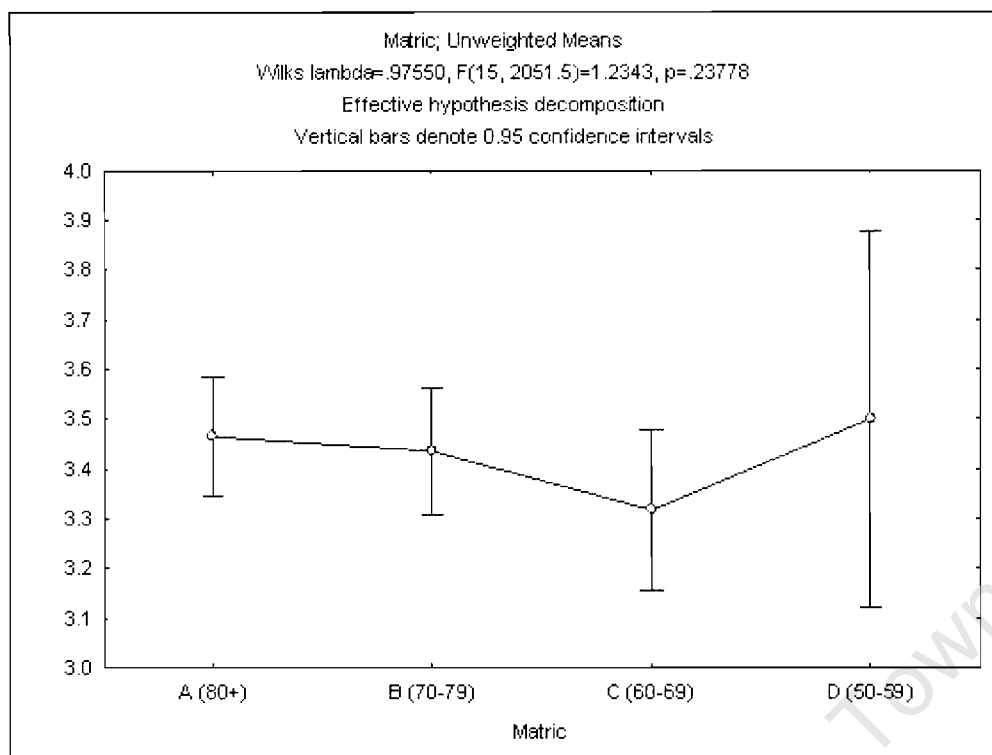
**Graph III.37: Means and standard deviations plot**



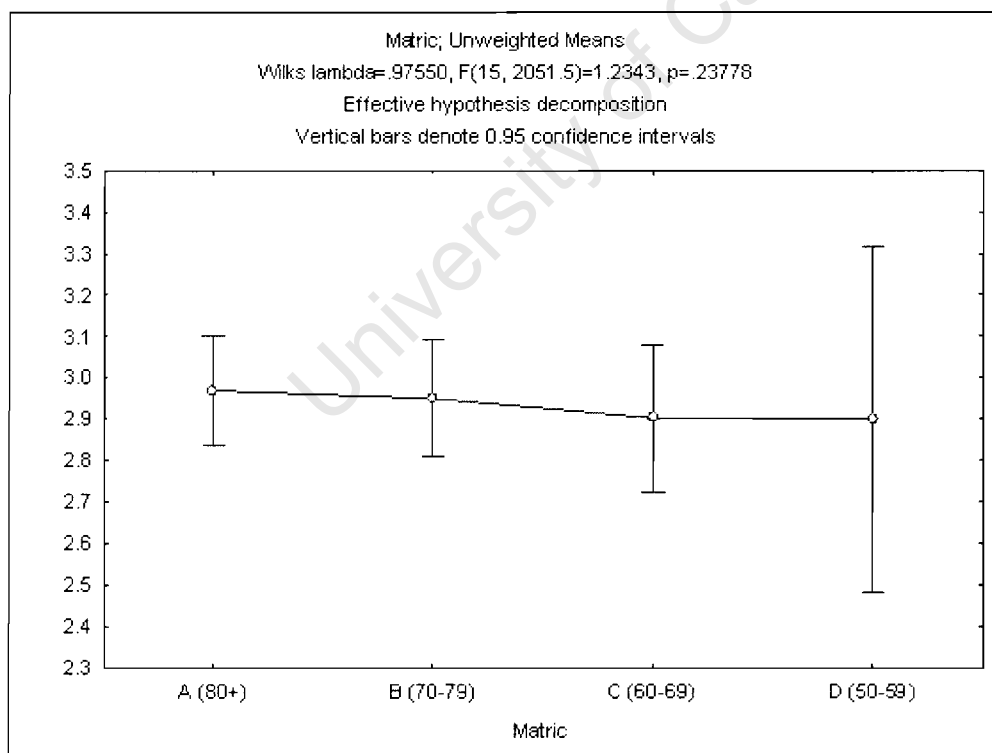
**Graph III.38: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Graph III.39: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Graph III.40: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result (overall):** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

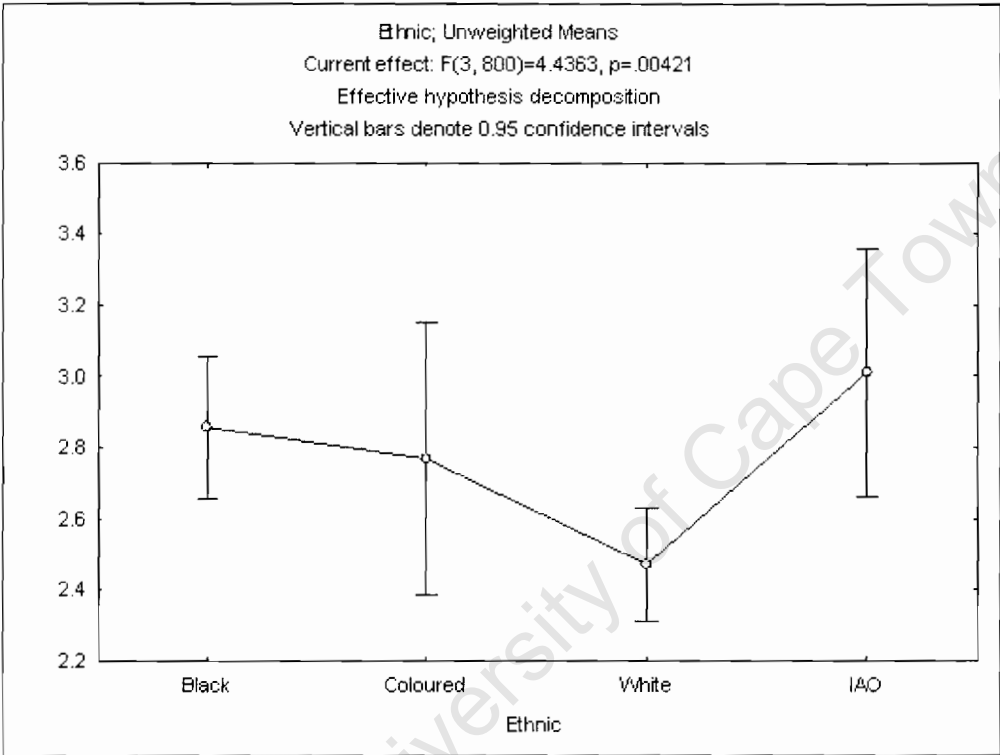
Question 9: Ethnic group analysis

$H_0: \mu_{black} = \mu_{coloured} = \mu_{white} = \mu_{IAO}$   
 $H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.25: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Ethnic	34.76	3	11.59	4.436	.004*

Graph III.41: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \leq 0.05$ )

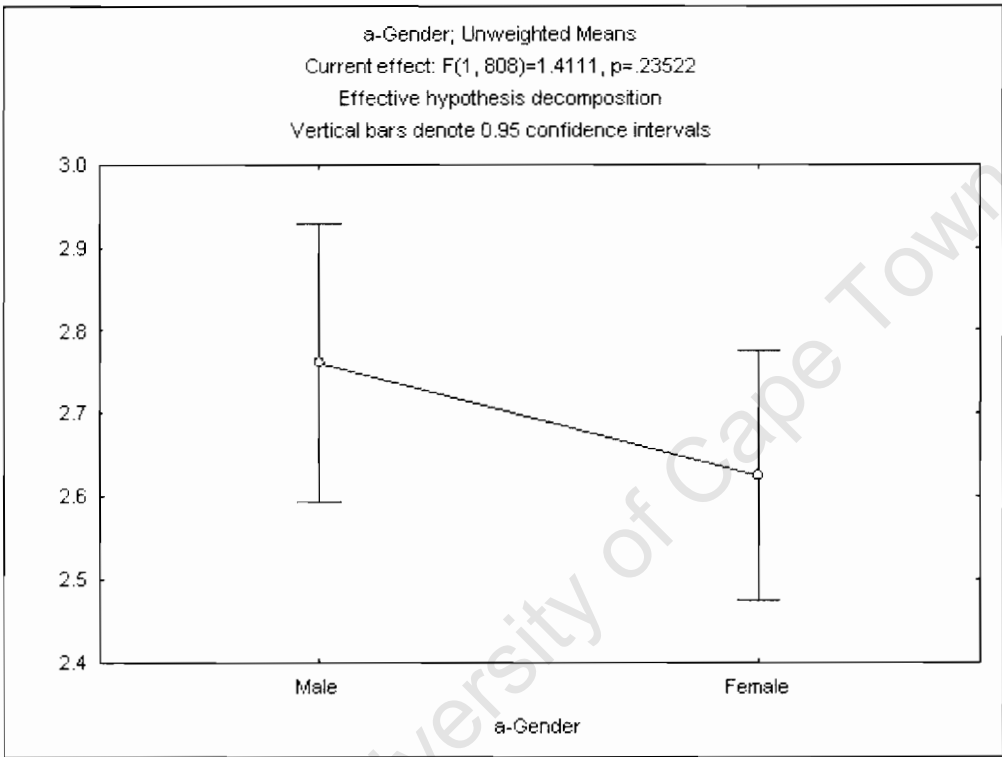
Question 9: Gender analysis

$H_0: \mu_{\text{male}} = \mu_{\text{female}}$   
 $H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Table III.26: ANOVA table

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Gender	3.736	1	3.736	1.411	.235

Graph III.42: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

### Question 9: Faculty analysis

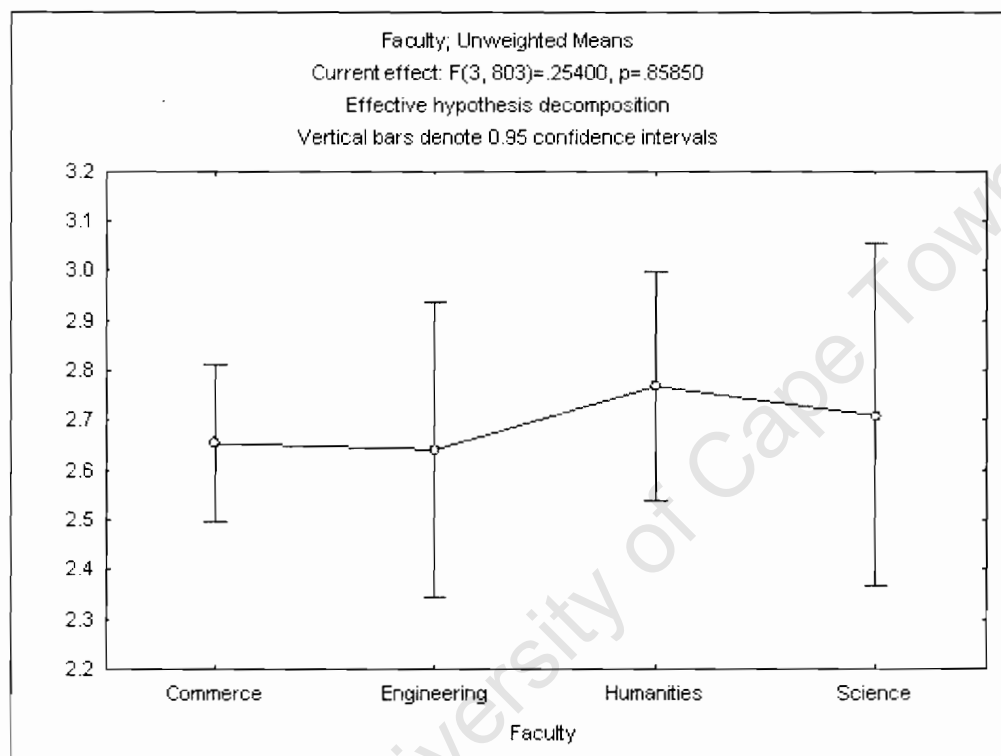
**Table III.27: ANOVA table**

$H_0: \mu_{\text{commerce}} = \mu_{\text{engineering}} = \mu_{\text{science}} = \mu_{\text{humanities}}$

$H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Faculty	2.018	3	.673	.254	.859

**Graph III.43: Means and standard deviations plot**



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p \geq 0.05$ )

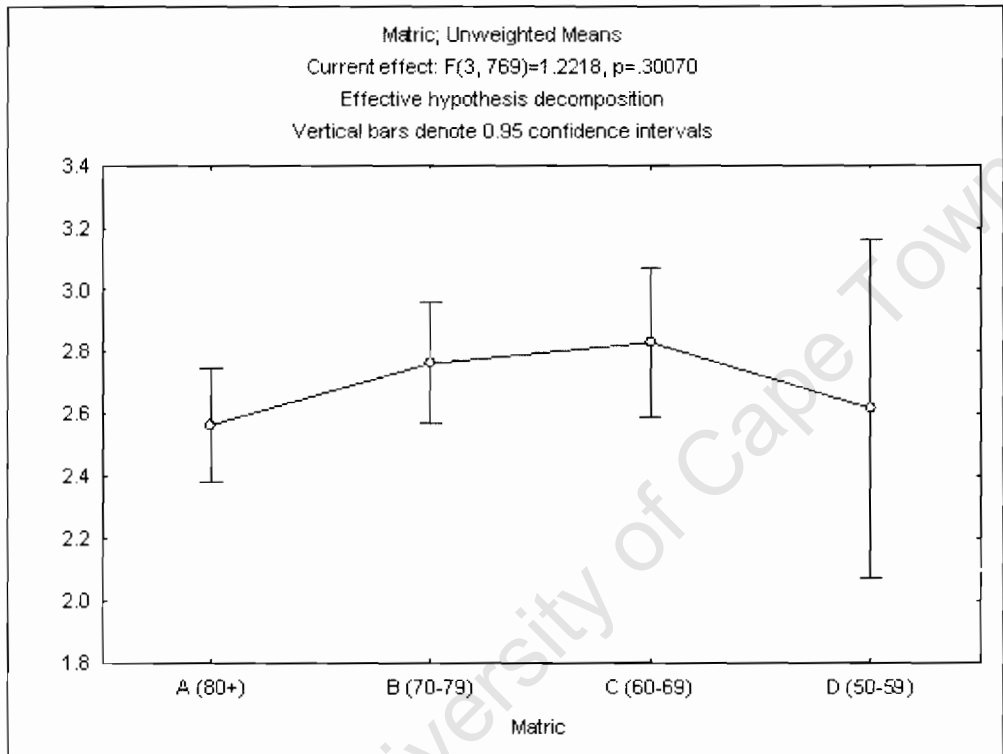
### Question 9: Matric aggregate analysis

Table III.28: ANOVA table

$H_0: \mu_{A \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{B \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{C \text{ aggregate}} = \mu_{D \text{ aggregate}}$   
 $H_1$ : At least one mean differs across the treatment levels

Effect	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-ratio	P value
Matric	9.583	3	3.194	1.222	.301

Graph III.44: Means and standard deviations plot



**Result:** Null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the five percent significance level (i.e.  $p>=0.05$ )